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THE PHANTOM LEG.

I.

It was the close of a warm summer's day in the year 1803, and the setting sun was shedding a purple glow on the white chalk cliffs and lofty trees of the venerable Normandy forests covering the plateau which crowns the rocky coast of Biville, between Tréport and Dieppe. Amidst the gathering shades, a column of smoke might be seen slowly rising from the roof of a farm-house in this secluded spot. Bois-Guillaume was a one-storied dwelling, with a barn adjoining it on one side, and a cow-shed on the other.

Four stalwart fair-haired young fellows were threshing wheat under a shed, poultry were picking up grains here and there, and pigs ran grunting about the yard. The door of the principal room in the house stood open, allowing the parting rays of the sun to fall on two men who sat facing each other at a long table over a mug of cider. The farmer stood smoking his pipe by an enormous fire-place, on which a turf fire was blazing, while his wife leaned against a dresser covered with crockery, wiping out a pewter mug, and eyeing the men who sat drinking.

The owner of the place bore a military rather than a bucolic aspect. He was in the prime of life, but his bushy eyebrows, black eyes, and swarthy complexion made him look ten years older than he really was, and there was a military cut about his hunting-jacket, red woollen belt, and velvet knee-breeches with long buff leather leggings, which corresponded to the daring expression on his hard angular features. The face of the wife, on the other hand, was round and plump, and her blue eyes beamed with sweetness and sagacity. She was tall, and her fine figure and the colour which coursed through her fair skin announced her Norman descent. Her brow was tanned and her cheeks freckled, and the sleeves rolled back to her elbows displayed a pair of arms that looked strong enough to carry a musket or guide a plough, but her graceful attitude softened the rustic vigour of her figure. Her dress was that of the wife of a well-to-do farmer, and the heavy gold cross on her neck bore testimony to their easy circumstances.

The two men at the table seemed pedlars, such as hawk calicoes, thread, needles, and almanacks about the country. One of them was a tall, slim, handsome young fellow; the other looked fifty at least, and his heavy build, stiff bearing, and impassive face contrasted strongly with the lively grace of his companion's bearing. They seemed, however, on excellent terms, and clinked glasses each time they filled them.

The woman stood watching them, and her eyes seemed riveted by a kind of fascination on the cold and melancholy face of the elder; her

husband, perhaps, perceived this, for he took his pipe from his mouth and said, rather roughly :

" Louise, it is time you were off. It will soon be twilight, and it will take you an hour to reach Penly Point."

" I am going," replied the young woman simply, and laying down the mug she had been polishing, she took a lantern from the wall, and throwing over her shoulders a black cloak which she took from a chest, went out without another word.

" Where are you sending her, Maneheu ?" asked the younger pedlar.

" To the coast, to make the preconcerted signals to the brig," replied the farmer. " The English vessel will not land her passenger unless she sees the lights."

" And as she has been cruising about all morning within cannon-shot, she would, doubtless, be glad to set him down, and sail back to Deal or Hastings. Still we have two hours before us, until it is perfectly dark ; then why should you despatch your charming wife so early, or, indeed, why should Madame Mancheu have any share at all in an expedition which may end in shots ?"

" If there be any shots, they will be fired on the creek of Biville, where we are going to assist our friends to climb up the rope swung from the cliff. Penly Point, where I am sending Louise, is more than three miles to the left on the Dieppe side, and it is there we always hoist the lantern, as we have agreed with the captain of the brig. Besides, no one thinks of suspecting a woman, and even if my wife fell in with the gendarmes, they would say nothing to her."

" Do the gendarmes often pass this way ?"

" They patrol here every now and then in the daytime, but they never come at night. They prefer lying in bed to roaming the country. But I have no time to chatter ; I shall dismiss my threshers, and then go to see if the cable is secure. You will not want me now ?"

" No, I know the path to the cliff, and am as familiar with Biville creek as with the galleries of the Palais-Royal."

" Then farewell for the present, gentlemen. I shall be waiting for you down there among the furze."

As soon as Maneheu had crossed the threshold, the elder pedlar said to the other :

" You are sure then, that George Cadoudal is to land to-night ?"

" Quite sure. He wrote me word that Captain Wright would land him between the 19th and 21st of August. This is the 21st, and the brig is in sight. I received orders from George to come and meet him with our most reliable friends, in case of an encounter with the gendarmes, so off I came to the farm, arriving yesterday. It was rather provoking, for I was enjoying myself tremendously in Paris. You have no idea how jolly it is there now ! But duty must come first, and you know how severe George is about our serving the king. Besides, his letter spoke of a spy whom we might chance to pounce on here, a former Chouan, possessed of our secrets. If he falls into our hands, he will have short shrift, I promise him, for our orders are precise. But now let us speak of yourself, my good old Liardot. Little did I think of falling in with you here on the coast of Normandy, after six years' separation, nor that we should be acting in concert to-night, as we used to do in the days of Barras. 'Pon my word, it gives me more pleasure to see you again than to contemplate the charms of Madame Tallien, with whom I danced at

Ranelagh last week ! And so you belong to us still ? I suppose George summoned you to Biville ? ”

“ I belong to you as I always have done and always shall ; but I have heard nothing from George. One of our friends in London sent me word that he was going to cross, and I had reason to think I might be of use to him here. I know the refuges we have between Paris and Bois-Guillaume, and that the pedlar’s disguise is the right one to assume, so I started with my pack on my back, and arrived here four-and-twenty hours after you.”

“ You did well to come, and it will be a joyful surprise to George to meet with such a good old comrade.”

“ I have not seen him since our last campaign in Morbihan, and have many things to tell him.”

“ You can tell him all to-night ; but I wonder I have never come across you in Paris, if you live there now. Of course, you are not likely to go to the balls, and there was little chance of my finding you my *vis-à-vis*, at Tivoli. You have never been there ? Well, I can tell you the gardens are delightful, and the women bewitching.”

“ My dear St. Victor, you will always be the same,” said Liardot, with a melancholy smile. “ You fancy yourself still in the days of the Directory.”

“ No, indeed. The dandy St. Victor, whom you knew in 1797, has now become the citizen Charles Valréas, a gentleman of independent means.”

“ So much the better. I too have changed my name and calling. I hold a situation in an office, and am known as Jacques Sourdat.”

“ Sourdat ? Did you say your name was Sourdat ? ”

“ Certainly I did. Why should that astonish you ? ”

The young man gazed on his companion, and said with some emotion :

“ When you were serving in Brittany, under George, were you not known by a different name again ? ”

“ Yes, I had a nickname, like all the rest.”

“ And what was it ? ”

“ Don’t you know ? Fleur-de-Rose.”

St. Victor turned pale, and half started from his seat.

“ Whatever is the matter ? ” asked Liardot.

“ Read this,” returned the young man, drawing a paper from his breast-pocket.

Liardot took it, unfolded it quietly, and read in a calm voice : “ ‘ An order to shoot on the spot, wherever you may find him, an individual who formerly served in the king’s army under the title of Fleur-de-Rose, signed *George Cadoudal, Lieutenant-General for His Majesty Louis XVIII.*, and I recognise his hand,” said Liardot, coldly. “ Your orders are valid, my good comrade.”

“ Yes, I am only too well aware of their validity,” said the young man, no longer disguising his emotion. “ Do they apply to you ? ”

“ I might deny it, since no description is attached, but my life is not worth a lie. I am the man who was known as Fleur-de-Rose in the royal army in 1799 ; and the man who now goes in Paris by the name of Jacques Sourdat.”

“ Then you own yourself a traitor ? ”

“ No. I own to bearing the name and nickname entered on that paper, but to nothing else.”

Jean Coster de St. Victor, who was the most elegant and bravest of George Cadoudal’s lieutenants, gazed with indignation mingled with pity

upon the veteran of the royalist cause whose treachery had just been so accidentally made known to him.

"You are not aware," said he, slowly, "that George was not content with merely sending me this order. He enlarged upon it in his letter."

"Indeed! And what did he tell you?"

"That after long serving our cause, you made a pretext last year of certain obligations which compelled you to remain in Paris instead of joining our leader and the princes in London."

"That is true. I refused to leave the country, just as I had refused in 1792 to emigrate. I thought then, as I think now, that it is best to serve one's king in France."

"Very well. But George writes, that instead of serving him in Paris, Fleur-de-Rose has betrayed him by selling our secrets to the First Consul's police."

"What is to prove it?" asked Liardot, sharply.

"Prove it? Tell me whether it is true or false that Jacques Sonrdat has accepted a situation in an office?"

"Quite true. I have just been telling you so myself."

"Yes, but you have not told me what I learned from George's letter, that you are employed by Fouché and receive pay from the apostate priest, the regicide who has become valet and spy to Bonaparte. Come, defend yourself!"

"I have no reply to make, and disdain any defence."

"Then it is true! You, who once risked your life and sacrificed your fortune in conspiring against the Directory, and afterwards fought bravely by George's side, sharing the hard fortunes of the Chouans, can have stooped to such degradation? It is too mean, I cannot yet bring myself to believe in such infamy."

"And so," said Liardot, still preserving his composure, "Cadoudal declares me a traitor merely because I am engaged as a secretary by Fouché the senator, who is no longer at the head of the police, since Bonaparte deprived him last year of his office. Is that his sole ground of accusation against me?"

"No," cried St. Victor, indignantly, "George has more conclusive proofs of your infamy. He declares that you know the secrets of our landing-place at Biville, and are repairing to the coast in disguise, to direct those appointed to arrest him. Nor can he be mistaken, since I meet you here disguised as a pedlar at the very moment when he is about to land. Fouché's emissaries, your accomplices, are doubtless in hiding near the coast, only awaiting your arrival to enclose us all in their net. But I swear you shall have not the chance of giving the alarm."

"I believe," resumed the former Chouan tranquilly, "that a picked detachment of gendarmes has been recently despatched from Paris to keep a look-out in the neighbourhood of Dieppe."

"You grant that! Impudence could go no further. Then confess at the same time that you have come here in order to assist them."

"Or to thwart them. I see no other alternative."

This curt rejoinder startled St. Victor, and led him, doubtless, to alter his tone.

"Liardot," said he, after a brief pause, looking his old comrade straight in the face, "we have known each other for the last ten years, and I have always looked on you as one of the most noble and generous of men. Both appearances and your own confessions are against you, but I yearn to find

you innocent. You may be able to offer some excuse that would extenuate your conduct. I am ready to listen to what you can say."

"You forget that your orders will not justify you in doing so; they command you simply to shoot on the spot—"

"I know that, and all it may cost me not to execute them literally, but I will make every effort in my power to save you from a death of shame. Besides, my heart bleeds, I must own, at the thought of ordering an old comrade to be shot down, nay, more, a friend—for you *have* been my friend, Liardot, and shall still be if you can clear yourself from this abominable accusation."

A cloud overspread the old conspirator's bronzed countenance for the first time; his eyes drooped, and St. Victor fancied he could detect the sparkle of a tear.

"Come," resumed the young Chouan, warmly, "there is still time for an explanation. Why have you accepted pay from Fouché, and why did you come here? No loyal soldier such as I once knew would sell his honour for a paltry sum of money."

"I thank you for suspending judgment when facts seem to condemn me. I had weighty reasons for acting as I have done."

"Let me know them, and on my word of honour, I will venture to delay execution of the sentence."

"I can reveal them to no one but George. By confiding to you the motives of my conduct, I should be injuring our cause."

"Wretched man, this subterfuge is tantamount to a confession. Do you think me simple enough not to see that if you are a traitor, you will betray us this very night? If I let you live till George has landed, I shall be giving you time to warn your accomplices, the picked gendarmes you mentioned."

"You are justified in your argument, and I can make no objections," said Liardot, burying his head in his hands, and bowing it on the table in a strange reverie. There was silence for a time; St. Victor fidgeted on his seat, his countenance betraying his agitation, till the old soldier raised his head.

"Time is passing, and they will be waiting for you on the cliff. What have you decided to do with me?" asked he, coolly.

"Listen," said the young man in a voice which, in spite of himself, sounded tremulous, "I know not what may have been the cause that has led you to commit this crime, but I would fain hope a spark of honour still survives in your breast. You shall be your own judge. If you were in my place, what would you do?"

"Execute Cadoudal's order," was the prompt reply. "Passive obedience is the first duty of a soldier."

St. Victor turned white at this heroic answer. "You know," said he, with an effort, "that the hour is come."

"I know it and am prepared. Where are your men?"

"Five hundred paces off, in a disused quarry on the way to Biville."

"Ah! It will be a good place for shooting me, for the stone walls will deaden the noise, and you run the risk of the sounds being heard by the gendarmes, who may even now be hovering round the farm."

"Then you refuse to save your life by confessing—"

"I do. Have you any Chouans who served along with me among your men?"

"Burban, whom we used to call Malabry when we were in Brittany, and Deville."

"Ah, we knew him as Tamerlane, I think? Is he not the one who came straight from college to join us, at the time of the last rising in Morbihan?"

St. Victor signified his assent.

"I saved their lives at the battle of Fougères," resumed Liardot. "You must not let them recognise me, but night is coming, and I will slouch my hat over my eyes. The time has come," added he, rising.

"For the last time, I ask you to speak. I swear that I seek but for a pretext to spare you."

"To spare me! I would die ten times over rather than be spared. 'Tis thus I ought to end," murmured he to himself, as if troubled by some reminiscence. Then, drawing himself up proudly, he said in a firm voice: "Let us be going."

He marched towards the door with the same measured step with which he had crossed the threshold a few hours before when asking Maneheu for the hospitality shown by the farmer to all provided with the pass-word, and waited outside for the friend who was about to have him executed. The latter seemed scarcely eager to follow, and might possibly have let him escape had he chosen.

"I am waiting for you," said Liardot, gently.

"Then you are eager to die?"

"Yes. You must understand that now my fate is decided, delay only protracts my sufferings. Besides, every minute is precious to you and our friends. You do not suspect your peril."

"Ah, the gendarmes sent after us by your master, Fouché, must of course be on our track if they have followed your instructions," said St. Victor, with fresh indignation.

"I do not believe they are yet, but they are certain to make a survey of the coast this night, so I advise you to despatch me promptly, and then hasten George's landing, if possible."

"That is my affair," said the young man harshly, exasperated by replies which he began to take for braggadocio. "You will walk by my side," added he, "and if you make any attempt to escape, I shall blow your brains out."

With these words he had risen and joined Liardot. He took out his pistol and loaded it, but his companion's eyes expressed so much contempt for his threat and so little fear of death, that he lowered his weapon.

"Cannot you understand that I have made up my mind to die, and mean to fall like a soldier?" said the old Chouan. "I wish to meet the official volley, and not to have my head broken like an escaped convict."

"You shall have your wish. Only if you imagine I mean merely to test you and frighten you by a pretended volley, you will find yourself mistaken. My men carry excellent loaded carbines and are good shots."

"So I suppose, and therefore pray make haste. The waning light might make them miss their aim."

"Very well, we will go," muttered the young man, contending against more emotion than he cared to show.

All was silent around the farm as the two men left it, directing their steps towards the cliff beneath. The sea was not visible, but its dull murmur could be heard as it broke on the pebble beach.

"The quarry lies there before us, I suppose?" remarked Liardot, pointing to a black spot on the grey sweep of moorland.

"Yes," said St. Victor drily.

"Then it must be close to the coast."

"Two gunshots off."

"The post is badly chosen."

"You approved of it just now."

"For dying in, I did, but it is imprudent to have left your men there. If the *blues* patrol to-night, they are sure to follow the cliff line, and may come upon your ambuscade."

"Well, in that case, we shall receive them with our guns."

"Yes, but they will be a strong body and get the best of it."

"Many thanks for the advice. I presume you will allow me to have the control of my own company."

"You are right ; besides, in another quarter of an hour, I shall be unable to interfere. Have the kindness, however, to convey a message for me."

"To whom ?"

"To General Cadoudal. Tell him that his plans have been reported to the police of late."

"You are aware of it," rejoined St. Victor ironically.

"And that he has now a most dangerous adversary," pursued Liardot, taking no notice of the sarcasm.

"Your employer, Fouché, I presume ?"

"Yes, in the first place, but there is a man even more dangerous, though in a humbler position. An officer who has shared Bonaparte's campaigns and is ardently devoted to the First Consul ; he has seen George in Paris and sworn to catch him ; I know the determination of his character, and charge you to recommend our beloved general to beware of the man named Robert, who is now quartered on the Quai d'Orsay. That is all I have to say. Here we are, I believe. Tell me what to do."

The pair had arrived on the edge of a hollow where human figures might be seen moving in the twilight ; here St. Victor made a sign to Liardot to pause, while he issued a cry which skillfully mimicked the hoot of an owl. This was the rallying signal of the Chouans, and a faint hooting was heard in reply.

"Come on," said he, taking Liardot by the arm and leading him through the quarry, where he placed him in front of a huge block of stone. "It is your own doing if you die. Have you any parting message to leave for some friend—some woman ?"

"None. I have neither friends nor mistress. My last request is that you will allow me to give the word to fire."

"You have been an officer in the king's army and are entitled to do so. Farewell, Liardot," murmured St. Victor, almost melting into tears.

"Farewell. You can tell George that you have done your duty, and that I died as they can who serve a noble cause."

St. Victor hesitated a moment, then made a gesture of angry despair and advanced towards his men ; a few words were spoken in a low tone, and immediately six of them stepped forward and placed themselves at a distance of four feet from the prisoner, who awaited them with an erect carriage and folded arms. "Soldiers," cried Liardot, "make ready !" The butt-ends of their guns were heard moving in perfect unison. "Present arms !" continued the sonorous voice of the old Chouan. Another moment, and he would have given the word "Fire !" His lips were just parting, when a voice seemed to interpose from the sky above with the unexpected challenge : "Down with your arms, or you are all dead men !"

Every actor in the scene started, and raised his head to see under what outward aspect Providence had intervened. The twilight revealed the

shadowy forms of about twenty men armed with guns, standing out against the sky on the brink of the quarry; their two-cornered hats were distinctly visible, leaving no room to doubt that these were some of the picked gendarmes, probably those sent to keep a watch on the coast of Biville.

Immediately above the block by which the prisoner was stationed, appeared a tall man, grasping a naked sabre; evidently this was the officer in charge of the patrol, who had just shouted the command to surrender. Liardot had turned without giving the slightest heed to the men about to fire on him, while St. Victor was drawing his pistols from his belt and muttering between his teeth: "The wretch! So this was the help on which he calculated! He knew that this quarry was a trap. I ought to have blown out his brains on the way hither, and since we are caught, I need have no scruples now."

The group who were to have fired had, naturally, by an instinct of self-defence, fallen back on the half dozen Chouans who formed the reserve force, yet their resolute attitude showed they were only awaiting the word of command to commence an energetic defence and sell their lives dearly. Their leader, however, delayed, because he would first punish their betrayer: he was just walking up to shoot Liardot from behind as a cur and a spy, when the latter shouted to the officer standing above: "What, is that you, Major Robert! This is a luckier meeting than I expected."

"Who is it that ventures thus to address me by name?" was the surly rejoinder.

"What, don't you recognise me, Major? I am Jacques Sourdats."

"Ah," muttered St. Victor, "he throws off the mask now, and I shall have no scruple about blowing out his brains."

"Sourdats!" repeated the officer, "the Sourdats whom M. Fouché employs?"

"Yes, to be sure, you know my master sent me here to be of what little service I could."

"Ah, I remember now. M. Fouché told me he had sent you down and that I might meet you somewhere about Dieppe."

St. Victor was gently drawing nearer all the while, determined not to miss his aim. "But," resumed the major, "what the deuce are you doing in that hole?"

"Drilling my men, as you see, sir."

"Your men? What does that mean? Have you turned soldier?"

"No, but I once served in the army, you know."

"Yes, in the rebel army, but now—"

"All the good fellows you see assembled here are under my orders; most of them are old soldiers like myself who have rallied round the government, and on whom I can rely. But as they have nearly forgotten how to handle their guns, I thought it would be as well to exercise them to-night. If the Chouans should land in any numbers, we want to be ready for them."

St. Victor heard all this and could not understand it, he thought it sure to mean some fresh ruse; still, though he was now within easy reach of Liardot, he refrained from pressing the trigger of his pistol, and continued to listen.

"This is all very well, Sourdats," resumed the major, "and I am not sorry to meet you, as you are better acquainted with the country than myself. But as you know, I am at the head of the expedition and choose to see everything for myself. So remain where you are with your men, and I will come down and inspect them."

"Stand at ease, my men," cried he to his gendarmes, who still stood

with their guns levelled, "and pay attention to my orders when I get down. If I cry 'Fire!' aim at the whole troop without troubling your heads about me." And with an agility equal to his spirit, the officer took one leap on to a spur of rock, and a second which landed him at its base.

"When I have killed the spy, I shall have a ball left for the gendarme," muttered St. Victor; he held a pistol in either hand, but stood motionless, and so did his men, who had heard all, and knew their fate hung in the balance.

"Step forward, Sourdat," said the Major, as soon as he had recovered from the impetus of his spring. "I know your voice, but I should like to have a closer view of your figure."

"Here I am, sir," replied Liardot, quietly stepping forward.

"Ah, it is really you," exclaimed the officer, after examining him closely. "There is but little light, but you have a head that is unmistakable. Well! you are an active fellow, and prompt in your movements, I shall not forget to mention you in my report. But now to business—how many men have you?"

"Twelve."

"Is that tall fellow planted behind you your lieutenant?"

"Yes, Major."

St. Victor began to understand, or fancied he did, though he dared not build too much on the new hope that had dawned upon him.

"Good," said the officer. "And now to the point. What are your plans for to-night?"

"Whatever you may lay out, Major. I could never presume—"

"Oh, a truce to compliments. An English vessel has been in sight all day, and has had her reasons for hugging the coast. I would wager my epaulettes she means to set down passengers to-night. You have examined the coast; where do you think the Chouans will land?"

"At Penly Point," returned Liardot without hesitation.

"That promontory on our left?"

"Yes, it is the only point on the shore where a boat can put in. So I was told at Dieppe, and I am the more ready to believe it, because as I was making my rounds on the moorland above and caught the sound of your voices, I had just descried a light in that direction."

"A light on Penly Point? A signal, no doubt, Major. The English vessel must have friends on this side warning her that the coast is clear, and she is going to land her passengers. You have not a minute to lose."

"I don't mean to lose it. We shall make our way at once to the beacon, and you will follow the opposite side of the coast with your men. If you come across the Chouans, fire, and we will come to your assistance. My gendarmes are strong enough without you. We meet again in this quarry at daybreak."

"All right, Major," was the answer made by the supposed Sourdat, and within five minutes the company had vanished.

"Well, St. Victor," said Liardot calmly, "do you still regard me as a traitor?"

St. Victor held out his arms by way of reply, saying: "Forgive my suspicions, dear friend, and let me embrace you."

But the old Chouan merely replied with cool irony: "I have nothing to forgive. You were only doing your duty. But what proves me innocent now?"

"Can you ask? Have we not all seen that a word from you to that officer and we should all have been massacred?"

"Who knows?" said Liardot still rallying him. "Perhaps I was merely endeavouring to save my own skin. Bullets are no respecters of persons."

"Oh, my good friend," said the young man in sincere and heartfelt accents, "do not avenge yourself by overwhelming me with shame. When I think I could have believed for a single moment in your treachery, I feel ready to blow out my own brains instead of yours. I may be a light-headed fool and a dandy, but I have sufficient sense to see how you managed to protect George's landing. I ask for no further explanation, keep it for our chief, but suffer me, for the sake of our former friendship, to clasp you to my heart."

The old soldier's phlegm could not resist this passionate appeal. He advanced to meet his embrace, and returned it cordially.

"And now," exclaimed the young lieutenant, "I have my old Liardot again! If you only knew what I have suffered during the last hour! But now I feel sure of our success, and if our beloved general does not land to-night under the very nose of those picked gendarmes, I am ready to swear Madamc Récamier is ugly!"

"I hope all will go well, but we must make haste," said Liardot, shrugging his shoulders at his companion's incorrigible frivolity. "You are aware the gendarmes are on their way to Penly Point?"

"Yes, indeed, and I wondered at your clever stratagem, seeing you know nothing of the coast."

"It was suggested to me by the Major's own announcement of the light he had seen there. Maneheu had stated in my presence that his wife had gone to make the signals which would lead the English brig to send her boat to Biville creek. If she puts off at once, we shall have time to see George, send him on his way, and disperse before the gendarmes discover their mistake."

"And what about meeting the Major here at daybreak?"

"I shall be the only one to appear, and will manage to persuade him that I have sent you to beat all round the Tréport district. He could not see your faces for the gathering darkness, and I don't mean him to do so, for I fear we may come across him again. So now lead the way, as you know the spot where Maneheu is expecting us by the cable."

"We shall be there in ten minutes. Let me first introduce to you two old acquaintances, Burban, who goes by the name of Malabry, and Deville, known as Tamerlane. Burban is the Hercules who thinks of nothing but his orders; you will remember how he once killed a *blue* with a single blow of his fist, and how he kept sentry for thirty hours on the top of an oak-tree, because they had forgotten to relieve guard. Deville, you know, was destined for the church, and is of good family. Malabry and Tamerlane, forward!"

The two men summoned advanced from the little troop. Liardot met them half-way, and said briefly: "Good-day, comrades! I hope you have not forgotten Fleur-de-Rose."

"What, is this you, my boy?" said the gruff voice of Malabry, who was a thick-set, broad-shouldered man. "I am glad to see you again; I thought you had been shot long ago, and never imagined just now that it was you I was about to send a bullet through."

"I shall mark this day with a white stone, my dear Fleur-de-Rose," broke in Tamerlane, a slender, fair-headed youth, ill-befitting his *sabrequet*.

"March on, my lads," said St. Victor. "Fleur-de-Rose and I will lead the way to the cliff. Follow at a distance, and disperse over the moorland so as not to form a mass which may be noticed."

The night had come and threatened to be stormy; great waves were beat-

ing violently on the shore. "Your Major was right," said St. Victor suddenly, pointing to the horizon; "there is a light on Penly Point."

"The lantern of the farmer's wife," replied Liardot; "I knew it when I sent the *blues* to the other side. If George succeeds in landing, as I hope he may, he will owe it to that woman."

"Yes, she is saving us all, but she runs a great risk of falling into the hands of the police. Poor Louise! What will they do with her?"

"Women have always some means of escape," said Liardot carelessly. "Did you not hear her husband say that the gendarmes would not arrest her, even if they were to meet her after sunset?"

"He was speaking of the local police," returned St. Victor, "and had no suspicion of Fouché's detachment being here, who do not take things so easily. I can't say why, but I can't help suspecting that M. Maneheu is not too tender a husband."

"That does not concern us much," returned Liardot drily, "we ought to be looking out for the spot where the farmer lies waiting, for we must surely be near it now."

"I think so. The cliff which rises above Biville creek is before us, and our man must be hiding under one of these furze-bushes. But we shall soon know." The young man raised his hands to his mouth, and imitated so perfectly the melancholy cry of the osprey which in its stifled hoarseness resembles the death-rattle, that Liardot started.

"You see I can still manage it, though I have been out of practice in London and Paris," laughed St. Victor. "If Maneheu is here, he will soon reply, for he can hoot just like an owl." As he spoke, the figure of a man appeared suddenly by his side.

"Here I am," said the voice of the farmer of Bois-Guillaume.

"It is well you spoke at once, or I should have cracked your skull," growled the lieutenant, relaxing the pistol he had grasped.

"I was too near you to hoot," returned Maneheu.

"And well concealed too! I should have walked over you next."

"The gendarmes nearly did so just now."

"Did you see them?"

"As clearly as I see you. They were nineteen and one officer."

"Just so. Happily we are rid of them for a while; they are gone on to Penly."

"So I think, but they may return."

"All the more reason why we should make haste."

"That does not depend on us, but on the English vessel, which may be quick or slow in dispatching her boat. Still I think the time is at hand."

"Then I will station my men," said St. Victor; "six with us at the cable, and six more to keep watch on the moor."

Again he uttered the cry of the screech-owl, but modified this time with a peculiar rhythm. This summoned all the troop, and the young officer's instructions were promptly obeyed, the detachment to aid in the disembarkation, which included Malabry and Tamerlane, being clustered round St. Victor and Liardot on the edge of the cliff.

The signs of a storm were increasing each minute. "In another half-hour or hour at the most, the brig will be forced to put out," said the farmer. "If she continues to hug the shore with this wind on, she will soon be driven on the rocks."

"Why is she waiting to dispatch her boat?"

"For the signal," was the laconic answer,

"The signal? Your wife gave it. We have just seen a fire on Penly Point."

"So have I, but it disappeared shortly after the *blues* passed me. Besides, that is not the light we use to announce that the cable passage is open. Louise carries a seaman's lantern, furnished with glasses of different colours, and an apparatus for throwing out the light to a distance. What you saw only declared that my wife was at her post. When the light turns to red and is raised aloft, it will mean that the way is clear, and the brig will reply by hoisting a light on her main mast, to say, I am lowering my boat, he ready to receive the passenger at Biville creek."

"Yes," said St. Victor, "that was just how it was done when that brave fellow Wright landed me in France last winter."

"There is the red light," broke in Liardot.

"Good," exclaimed Maneheu, "Louise has reached the spot and seen the English vessel."

"She must have good eyes then, for it is pitch dark," muttered the young Chouan.

"Oh, the English vessel has understood, there is the green light," put in Liardot.

"So it is; then it is all right and we are sure to embrace George to-night. But is the red light to remain there on the point?" said St. Victor, turning to the farmer.

"Until that on the English vessel is extinguished, which will only be when her boat is back in safety. That has been the rule for the last two years."

"But your charming wife must be exposed to great risk, for the gen-darmes are nearly sure to surprise her with her light."

"Oh, Louise is clever and can invent some story, or if they venture to touch her, she has Jacobin to defend her."

"Who is Jacobin?"

"My dog, a pure Danish hound that could strangle any man."

"The red light is being lowered," cried Liardot, who was watching the signals; "it is disappearing—no—there it is again. Ah, now it has gone out completely."

"And the green light is still on the English mast. What does that mean?" asked St. Victor.

"It must mean that my wife has been surprised by the patrol," said Maneheu coolly. "But the boat has put out and will have time to set down its passenger, while the *blues* are occupied with Louise. And now, gentlemen, all hands to the cable, for with this wind it will not be easy to climb." And approaching the edge of the cliff, he bent down.

"This rustic does not trouble himself much about his pretty wife," growled the inflammable lieutenant. "If she has fallen into Major Robert's hands, he is quite capable of taking her to Paris to be cross-examined by Fouché. Since her husband cares so little about her, I shall do my best to rescue her from their hands."

"We will help you," whispered Malabry and Tamerlane, who had overheard him.

"To the cable, my friends!" said the severe tones of Liardot, who cared much less about Louise than about the success of their expedition.

"I am quite ready," replied St. Victor, "if M. Maueheu will only explain what is to be done."

"That I will," said the farmer. "Stoop down, and I will show you how the cable is fastened, and of what use it is."

Liardot was already lying flat on the heather by his side, and St. Victor and his men followed their example. Maneheu then pointed out the end of the cable firmly coiled round a pointed stone which must have been placed there on purpose, and was completely concealed by a thick furze-bush. The cable was thick, but not too much so to be grasped by a man's hands; it ran to the edge of the precipice under cover of the bushes and then hung down between the walls of a deep cleft. The farmer had fastened it the evening before, as he always did when a landing was expected; thanks to his precautions and ingenious arrangements, more than twenty persons had been safely landed within that year.

No one in the country suspected the farmer of Bois-Guillaume of having anything to do with the *émigrés*. The cleft at Biville was known only to smugglers, who were not likely to interfere, and the surrounding district was frequented mainly by goat-herds.

"The rope is safe, you see," said Maneheu. "I have coiled it three times more than I usually do round the stone which supports it, for it has been used for some time, and, however good the hemp may be, it will wear at last."

"A wise precaution," chimed in St. Victor. "I remember that when I made the ascent, on a stormy night like this, the wretched rope seemed to give under my hands, and now and then I fancied I could hear it crack, to say nothing of the wind bumping me against the walls of the cleft. How will George's colossal figure and weight fare, I wonder?"

"I know his skill and agility, and do not fear for him," said Liardot.

"His broad shoulders will help him," said Maneheu. "They will enable him to use both sides of the cleft."

This historic fissure resembled in point of fact a chimney; it reached from the top of the cliff to the bottom, and never exceeded four or five feet in width; it was its narrowness that made the ascent practicable; unless the traveller had occasionally found a foothold, he could never have scaled the rock, in spite of the knots with which the cable was studded.

"That is all very well, resumed Liardot, "but what are we to do?"

"Nothing at present," replied the farmer. "I am going to crawl to the edge of the cliff and watch for the boat. If any of you are long-sighted, he can accompany me."

"I will go," said Tamerlane, "Fleur-de-Rose will remember my powers of sight."

"The rest of you are to lie round the stone that supports the cable and wait for orders," said St. Victor, "while we two keep a look-out all round."

So saying, he and Liardot rose and planted themselves on a little hillock among the heather. The sound of thunder was now blending with the chorus of the waves. "What weather!" murmured St. Victor. "The light has not been rekindled on Penly Point."

"No, but the green light is still burning on the ship," said Liardot.

"Which shows that the boat must be on her way to Biville creek. It will be a miracle if she does not founder."

"George Cadoudal could never be allowed to perish by common accident."

"I admire your spirit, Liardot; your faith is as strong as that of the apostles."

"If I had not believed firmly in the justice of our cause, I should have been killed long ago."

"Hem ! It seems but a few moments since you were trying to compel us to send you out of the world, but I am not going to reproach you now. Let us rather think of George, who cannot be far off. Maneheu ! Can you see anything ?"

"Not yet. The night is too dark."

"It is grand, my dear fellow," said Tamerlane in his sonorous accents. "It reminds one of a famous distich by Lucretius, which, being translated, means—"

"The boat, the boat !" cried the farmer. "I have just caught sight of her in that flash of lightning, and she must have landed her passenger, for her head is turned towards the brig."

"Let no one move and let silence be kept in the ranks," said St. Victor imperatively, longing to kick the man who spouted poetry. "Maneheu ! look to the rope !"

"All right, I have my hand on it, and as soon as the pull comes, I shall feel it—there it is !—that is the tug to see if it will bear—three shakes, the proper signal—now it is taut, some one is ascending."

"At last," murmured Liardot.

A profound silence reigned. All knew that the cable bore George Cadoudal and his fortunes, hanging in the air two hundred feet beneath them. Maneheu could feel the rope shake, vibrate, and then relax, as if the man below were occasionally steadying himself for an instant on some point of rock. The gulls and sea-mews, disturbed in their niches, rose, flapping their great wings against the faces leaning over the cliff, and uttering their mournful cry.

After five minutes of painful suspense, a dry cracking noise was heard which proceeded from neither cliff nor heath. Liardot started and St. Victor stooped down, each fearing to betray his alarm. "Test the knot of the cable," said Maneheu, "I think it is giving a little."

Before the farmer had finished speaking, St. Victor had fallen on his knees and was feeling the cord and stone. "It is all over," cried he in horror ; "one loop of the coil has broken and the rest will follow. I can feel the hemp giving. And George cannot be more than halfway up ; in another half minute he will be shattered against the rock. What can we do ?"

"Nothing," muttered the farmer. "If I tried to hold the rope, it would only drag me over and kill me without saving the General."

"Come, my lads," said Liardot, who still retained his presence of mind. "Let us all help to weigh down the rope and prevent its breaking."

"Quite unnecessary, Fleur-de-Rose," said Tamerlane. "We have Hercules himself here, who is sufficient for the task." This speech was providential, as it reminded St. Victor of the remarkable strength of one of his men.

"Malabry, you are our only hope, what has become of you ?" cried he in the darkness.

"Here, what do you want with me ?" was the answer.

"Take the cable in both hands and try to press on it to relieve the weight attached."

"Here I have it and will not let go," said the Chouan, as if it were the simplest thing in the world.

"Shall you be strong enough to prevent the last coils on the stone from snapping ?"

"No, they are gone already, so I have the rope in my hands; but don't be afraid, I can hold it."

St. Victor was distracted and could not believe in the possibility of such a feat. Yet Malabry's was no mere boast; the thick-set figure had squatted down on the ground, and was clasping the stone with both hands, resting his head and broad shoulders against it, while his hands, riveted together like iron clamps, were grasping the rope. This attitude enabled him not merely to support the frightful tension on his muscles, but to prevent his being drawn down the slope towards the cliff. As soon as St. Victor desisted the situation, he uttered a cry of joy and sprang to his feet.

"George is saved," said he to Liardot.

"Heaven grant it," whispered the old soldier, "but I fear Malabry will not be able to hold out. George may still be a hundred feet from the summit, for I can see nothing."

"I see something," said Tamerlane, whose lynx eyes were fixed on the dark chasm. "A black dot, and it is moving."

"It may be a sea-gull."

"No, the General put them all to flight long ago. I was glad to see they flew to the right, for, as Virgil says in the *Georgics*—"

"No quotations, Tamerlane," said St. Victor, "but tell us if you see a man in the left."

"Yes, I am sure of it now, not more than a hundred feet off. I am sure it is George, I recognise his shoulders."

"I see him too," said Mancheu. "At the rate he is climbing, he may be up in two or three minutes."

"Courage, General," cried St. Victor, bending over the precipice.

"Try to hold out, old fellow," said Liardot, turning to Malabry, who was still in the same position.

"Never fear, Fleur-de-Rose, I am good for another quarter of an hour," said the Hercules in a stifled voice. His powers of endurance were nearly exhausted, though his companions had thrown themselves on the cable between the stone and the cliff to endeavour to relieve him a little.

"General, we are here!" shouted St. Victor again, and this time the reply came in a fine sonorous voice, "Good evening, my lads; here I am!"

A thrill of pleasure passed through all, as they repeated in low tones, "It is really the General!"

Tamerlane and Mancheu rose to leave the passage clear, and Liardot retired a little. An enormous head soon appeared on a level with the cliff, and in another minute the colossal figure of George Cadoudal stood on French soil.

"Are you here, St. Victor?" said he.

"Present, General," was the reply.

"Then come and embrace me," rejoined the terrible leader, who, for the last year, had been resisting almost single-handed the ascendant star of Bonaparte.

St. Victor at once threw himself into Cadoudal's arms, where his delicate limbs suffered slightly from the hearty embrace he received.

"I am glad to see you again, my son," murmured George.

"Thank you, General, but my delight is even greater, for a few minutes ago I feared I should never serve under you again."

"Why so?"

"The rope broke as you were ascending the cliff."

"Ah, then that was the shock I felt when I had got about half way.

Who was entrusted with the examination of the rope?" asked George, in that rigid tone which alarmed the most intrepid of the Chouans.

"Maneheu, the farmer of Bois-Guillaume, here he is," replied the young man, thrusting Louise's husband forward. "But I swear it was not his fault, General. The rope had been tested ten times and examined only yesterday. The fracture was inexplicable."

"I never believe in effects without causes, my dear St. Victor; but since you answer for this man, I will overlook his negligence this once. Well then," added George, after a silence which seemed very long to Maneheu, "if the cable broke, how did you manage to keep me from falling?"

"Come forward, Malabry," cried the lieutenant. The man rose from the stone on which he had earned a right to rest, and advanced somewhat after the fashion of a tame bear who has been taught to walk on his hind paws.

"What, it is you, Burban," said George, who knew all his soldiers by their real as well as their nickname. "Then I can imagine how it was, for I know what a Samson you are, and I shall not forget it," and he held out his hand, which the Hercules seized and pressed.

"And now," resumed Cadoudal, "can you explain what has taken place on Penly Point? The captain of the brig was impatient for the signal, because the wind was rising every minute, at last it appeared, and the boat was at once launched to take me to the foot of the cliff at Biville, but before I was a gunshot from the vessel, the red light had vanished. The sailors wanted to turn back, but I offered them five-and-twenty guineas to land me at my own risk and peril, so I prevailed on them, and it is well I did, as I find you here waiting according to arrangement. Some accident must however have befallen the man entrusted with the lantern."

"It was not a man, but a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes, Maneheu's wife."

"Then you have neglected my instructions again," said Cadoudal, severely. "I have often impressed upon you that our secrets must not be at the mercy of a woman's tongue."

"This is no common woman, and she has probably just rendered us a great service by allowing the picked gendarmes to arrest her. If they were not now occupied in questioning her, we should probably have them on us."

"The picked gendarmes, you say? Have they been sent down from Paris?"

"Yes, a whole detachment under the command of a superior officer."

"Then we must have been betrayed by that miscreant, Fleur-de-Rose. He was the only man aware that I was to land during the third week in August; it must be he who gave Fouché warning, and planned this expedition. My first care on reaching Paris will be to rid the earth of the noxious vermin which goes by the name of Jacques Sourdat."

"The traitor stands before you, George," said Liardot, suddenly stepping forward.

"Fleur-de-Rose!" exclaimed Cadoudal, who instantly recognised his former lieutenant. Then turning to St. Victor: "How is it that I find this man still living?" asked he, with a calmness more terrible than any explosion of anger.

"General, you have doubtless been deluded by false reports," returned the young man bravely. "My friend, Liardot has just proved that he is

no traitor, and if you will listen, he will tell you why he has become Jacques Sourdat, one of Fouché's emissaries."

"Well, I will hear him, and promise that justice shall be done. Burban, be ready to kill this man as soon as I give the order. Now, Citizen Sourdat."

"It is the judge's place to examine me," said Liardot, coolly.

"Very well. Why have you accepted employment from the demon in human form who directs the usurper's secret police?"

"That I might learn his secrets and reveal them to you."

"Rather that you might sell him mine, I should say."

"If I had sold them, you would be on your way at this moment to the dungeon of Vincennes. I had only to tell Fouché of the Biville creek, and mention the 21st of August."

"Who will say you have not? The gendarmes are apparently on our track, and we have no explanation of your presence here to-night."

"I came here to save your life, and that of these brave men, who would have been killed or made prisoners had I not been with them when the gendarmes surprised them. If you have still doubts, ask these men what they think of my treason."

Cadoudal was always prompt in carrying out his purposes, and there must have been an accent of sincerity in Liardot's words to have delayed his commands to Burban so long. George turned to his party, saying: "Is not this man telling me lies?"

"No, General, he is incapable of it, I would go bail for him," answered Tamerlane, the spokesman of the party.

"I knew Fleur-de-Rose in 1797," struck in St. Victor, "when he was leader of the *Collets Noirs*. Two hours ago I met him again, disguised as a pedlar, at the Bois-Guillaume farm, and learned from his own lips that he now passed by the name of Jacques Sourdat. I showed him your order to shoot him on the spot, he never flinched, but refused to justify his conduct, saying that he could do this to you alone. I told him he must die, and he made no resistance, but followed me to the place where our men lay in wait, only asking me to let him give the signal to fire upon him. He had already cried, 'Ready! Present!' when the gendarmes came down on us. Then, with a readiness and intrepidity which a traitor and coward could never have shown, he persuaded their captain, to whom he made himself known, that we were all in the First Consul's service, and prevailed on him and his men to go off to Penly Point. I assure you that but for him, General, we should all have been captured, and Fouché's soldiers would have received you on the top of the cliff."

"Very well," said Cadoudal coldly. "As he will reveal his secrets to none but myself, leave us alone, and I will question him." The order was instantly obeyed.

"You have alleged in defence," began George, "that you only enrolled yourself among Fouché's agents in order the better to serve us, and our comrades' evidence seems to clear you from the most serious part of the accusation, that of having come here in order to deliver us up to the gendarmes. Still that is not enough, as you must see; I shall require a more complete explanation before I can restore you to my confidence."

"I am ready to give it," said Liardot tranquilly.

"Then tell me first of all, why you persisted in remaining in France last year, when the princes' formal order summoned all the king's servants to England? My suspicions date from the day you refused to follow me.

Speak as clearly and concisely as possible, for, as you must know, I have no time to lose."

"You ask why I did not cross with you; you might remember what I often said when we fought side by side in Brittany. I have a horror of foreign assistance, and would not quit France lest I might be accused of receiving pay from England."

Cadoudal started and made an angry gesture. "I may be excused from differing from you on that point," said he drily, "and for thinking that the king's presence makes one at home anywhere, but we will pass that by. Your remaining in Paris was a sort of desertion, I will not call it a crime; it was not your patriotic principles however, I suppose, which led you to offer your services to the noble Fouché?"

"Perhaps so, but I will not attempt to persuade you. I will confine myself to facts. My first intention was to live in Paris and give up politics, as I had sacrificed myself and my fortune under the Directory and in taking up arms from 1797 to 1801. Our party seemed to have abandoned all efforts; but towards the end of 1802, I received news from a friend in London of a fresh movement to be set on foot in Paris against Bonaparte; this made me ask myself whether I were justified in remaining inactive, while the rest of you were risking your lives. I sought how I might best serve the cause in this new campaign; you had fighting men in plenty, as I knew, but I knew also that you had a far more dangerous enemy than the generals of the *blues*. This was the police—not the official police, but the secret force controlled by Fouché, who shows the more activity because he is longing to regain Bonaparte's favour and the office of which he was deprived. To avoid his traps, you needed a friend among his spies. Well, then I remembered that I was old and had lost everything, even the hope of laurels, so I told myself that my fighting days were over, and I might best close my career by rendering obscure services to our noble cause."

George made a slight movement, but did not choose yet to interrupt Liardot's confession, and the latter proceeded:

"I had long known Fouché, and been in relations with him in the year '5, when I was speculating in the public funds, while secretly conducting our conspiracy. The idea occurred to me of again playing a double game, and I overcame my repugnance to this unfrocked monk so far as to offer him my services. He received me most cordially, for he took me for a traitor, a man after his own heart. I told him I was penniless (which was not strictly true, as I had invested some money in foreign securities), and I stated that after the quieting down of the west, I had given up all connection with the royalists. I hinted that my former relations might enable me to supply him with valuable information, and he at once offered me an income of a hundred louis: I accepted the engagement, and have made such steps towards winning his confidence that he consults me on the most delicate points.

"The last we discussed was the despatch of this detachment of picked gendarmes to the Normandy coast, by order of the first Consul himself, to examine into the landing of some exiles about whom they had no certain information. I declared that I was well acquainted with the coast, and Fouché, who does not like any police but his own, sent me down to keep an eye on their proceedings. You will have heard from St. Victor how I discharged my mission, but that will lead to no rupture with the commanding officer of the gendarmes, and, on my return, I shall resume my place, and receive Fouché's confidences as before. Need I say that I am obliged

to earn it by denouncing exiles who will never set foot again in France, or describing as very dangerous, Chouans who have already fallen in our ranks?

"This is all I had to tell you, George. For the last six months I have been sacrificing to my king the only thing I had left, my honour; on the day when Louis XVIII. mounts his throne, I shall retire into obscurity. And now, if you still wish me to die, say but the word, and I will leap from this cliff; it will seem an accident and lead to no further inquiries. I have said my say, George; you are our leader, and I owe you obedience, only let us have no half-measures. Either give me your absolute confidence or—let me die."

"I do not wish you to die," said Cadoudal, holding out his hand, "but to become my friend again. It may be all very well to call yourself Jacques Sourdat," added he gaily, "but a Liardot cannot lie."

"Thank you, George," said Liardot simply, grasping his hand.

"The thanks are due from me," continued Cadoudal warmly, "for if I succeed, it will be owing to your devotion. Oh, my dear Fleur-de-Rose, you cut me out, I could never have the courage to undertake such a task as yours. You bring me the assistance I need; while I was in England I thought how desirable it would be to have a friend on the spot, but did not know how to achieve it. I may confess to my old and tried comrade that I have not begun this new enterprise without misgivings; you have seen my work in Brittany, but it will be different in Paris; I hate the capital and cannot hide in its streets as we did among the broom in Morbihan, and I feel afraid of being worsted in this land of spies. You see now how you may help me."

"Yes, I hope to be able to do you service, and must begin by warning you it is time we should part. The gendarmes are gone off on a false scent, but they are not far off and might fall upon us any minute. Give me and St. Victor orders, and then let us separate. Moments are hours just now."

"My orders will be very simple. How do you mean to return to Paris?"

"By the *diligence*, which I shall take from Dieppe to-morrow."

"Then you will be there some time before me, since I am obliged to go on foot and avoid the high road. But we can fix a day and place for meeting. I shall make my quarters No 6, Quai de Chaillot, with my old servant, Louis Picot, who lives in Paris. Will you be there at nine P.M. on the 1st of September at the top of Cours-la-Reine?"

"I will; but should you require me before then, your servant, Jacques Sourdat, lives in the Rue des Frouvaires, in the first house on the right as you come from the Rue St. Honoré. He is at his office most of the day, but spends his evenings at a café at the corner of the Rue du Mouton and Place de Grève, where you are sure to find him between eight and ten o'clock, reading his paper and sipping a glass of *eau sucrée*. If you cannot come yourself, tell your messenger to rap four times on the table with a six-franc piece, pausing between each two raps to summon the waiter. I shall understand the signal, and go to meet your messenger on the banks of the Seine, below the Quai de la Ferraille."

"All right. And now I want a guide to take me on to the successive stations where my friends are to lodge me for the night. I know the first is near Croixdalle, but I cannot reach it alone."

"I, or any of our men could guide you, but we do not belong to this part of the world, and might be noticed. The only safe guide I know of is Maneheu, the farmer at Bois-Guillaume."

"The man who had charge of the cable? He bears an excellent character."

"It will be as well to choose him, since the gendarmes will probably visit his farm to-morrow."

"What makes you think so?"

"His wife was intrusted with the signalling at Penly Point, and is probably arrested by this time."

"Oh, in that case, they are sure to pay a domiciliary visit, and neither farmer nor cable must be visible."

"Quite true, but the woman is courageous and devoted to our cause, if not to her husband; she will refuse to speak and go to prison rather than denounce us."

"Pooh! The commander of the detachment will soon learn who she is in one of the neighbouring villages."

"Very likely, for he is a shrewd fellow, and a dangerous enemy. But the inquiry will take time, and I am convinced that Major Robert, for such is his name, will end by taking her to Paris to be examined by Fouché himself."

"And you think she will persist in her silence?"

"I am sure of it, and will pledge myself to obtain her release."

"Then I need not trouble about her, but will take the farmer on with me. The mischief is out, and we must change our battery. Call him."

"Manehou!" shouted Liardot, and the farmer came forward from the group of Chouans, who had not caught a word of the conversation.

"Where do you come from?" asked Cadoudal abruptly.

"From St. James, General."

"Did you belong to De la Rouairie's levy?"

"Yes, General. I came to settle here three years ago, in my wife's native country."

"Your wife has just been arrested."

"It may be so, but I hope not."

"The mere possibility is enough to prevent your remaining in that house. You shall take me to-night to Tanguy's, a sabot-maker's in the forest of Hellet, and go on with me to Paris. I will set you up in business there to recompense you for the loss of your farm."

"That is nothing, but I have lost a good wife whom you cannot restore to me, General."

"I will restore her to you," said Liardot.

"You?" exclaimed Maneheu, in no grateful tone: "I know nothing of you and do not want your assistance."

"Hush," said George, "I promise you that you shall have your wife back. But remember that when I give an order, I expect absolute obedience, so prepare to follow me."

Manehou refrained from replying, but showed his cautious nature by drawing from his pocket a prepared taper, and striking a light, used it to set fire to the rope which Malabry had taken the precaution to draw up the cleft, and arrange in a coil on the dry grass.

"A wide-awake fellow that," muttered Cadoudal. "In Paris I may make something of him. And now, my lads," said he, raising his voice, "you know what you have to do, and will receive instructions from St. Victor, whom you must obey as my representative. When the day for action arrives, we shall meet, and you will see me at your head as in the days when we fought the soldiers of the Convention."

A few cries were raised of "Long live the general!" but were instantly suppressed by the imperious voice of Liardot, who was averse to imprudent manifestations.

"Are you ready, Maneheu?" said George. "Farewell, for the present, my fine fellows!" And pressing the hand of both his lieutenants, he vanished into the night.

"Well, it is all right now, and Bonaparte may be on his guard," resumed St. Victor. "We must part, my good old Liardot, but not for long, I hope. I shall expect you to call on me at No 32, Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève. What are you going to do?"

"Go to meet Major Robert and his gendarmes. If they have arrested Maneheu's wife, she will be with them, and I shall find an opportunity for telling her that we will not desert her. If, on the other hand, she has escaped and got back to the farm, I must explain her husband's departure and take her on to Paris, where we all hope to meet. Farewell."

After taking leave of him, St. Victor drew aside the two Chouans whom he honoured with his especial intimacy. "Comrades," said he, "I would bet anything Madame Maneheu is in the hands of the gendarmes; I have a plan for rescuing her on the road, will you join me?"

"With the greatest pleasure," replied both Tamerlane and Malabry.

"Stay with me then, and we will manage it," cried St. Victor, joyfully.

II.

WHILE George Cadoudal was quietly landing at Biville, the gendarmes despatched from Paris on purpose to guard the coast had gone off on a false tack, and their mistake, which might have cost the future emperor his life, was owing to a woman. The wife of the farmer at Bois-Guillaume was no ordinary character; she knew nothing of society, though her birth might have enabled her to take place with the oldest families, for her father's title of baron dated from an ancestor who had fought for William of Normandy at the battle of Hastings. The family, however, had declined since the days of chivalry, and having dropped the title, had gradually dropped into mere farmers, cultivating their own sadly diminished estate.

In 1793, the last survivor was a widower with an only daughter of sixteen, Louise Le Graverend, who was considered the belle of the neighbourhood. The father was on the point of being denounced for his political opinions, when he suddenly disappeared from the country, upon which his farm was sold as national property. The spirit of his ancestors had rekindled in Thomas Le Graverend, and he had suddenly sacrificed everything to go and join the rising in La Vendée, three months after the death of Louis XVI.

His daughter had learned from her father to sacrifice everything to duty, and started with him for La Vendée, where she followed the troops on foot, to tend the sick and wounded, and was occasionally called upon to fire a shot. Her father fell in the engagement at Pontorson, and she herself was wounded in the shoulder, and would have fallen into the hands of a merciless soldiery, had not a peasant carried her off fainting from the field on his cart.

This rustic deliverer had been gamekeeper to a gentleman who left the country in 1790, and was only waiting for the right moment to join the insurgent royalists; his master's château, however, had not yet found a purchaser, so he remained unmolested on the domain which he hoped one

day to restore to its real owner. Pierre Maneheu was young, intrepid, intelligent and good-looking, and he showed a generous devotion in nursing the poor wounded girl, when to conceal a rebel made him liable to be sent to the scaffold. Happily no one denounced him; he fell violently in love with Louise, and as soon as she was convalescent, implored her to marry him. The poor girl had seen her father fall under the republican's bullets, and knew herself left alone in the world; she felt the deepest gratitude, though not love, for her deliverer, and so readily consented to become his wife.

After the 9th Thermidor, Maneheu was able to live in peace on the produce of his gun and his garden, and Louise was not unhappy, though she regretted having no children. Matters went thus till the new insurrection of the Chouans burst forth on the borders of Normandy, Brittany, and Maine, when Pierre Maneheu was one of the first to take up arms, and his wife followed him in his adventurous expeditions.

Towards the close of 1808, the royalists' cause began to languish, and George Cadoudal came to France with the momentary illusion that he might win over General Bonaparte to his cause. The victor of Marengo, however, soon dismissed the Bourbon envoy, and Cadoudal left the Tuileries determined to recommence hostilities and direct them especially against the man whom he expressed himself as sorry not to have strangled when they were closeted together. His first care was to find a faithful man who would keep open some permanent means of communication on the coast of Normandy, which at that time was watched with much less care than that of Brittany.

The choice fell on Pierre Maneheu; his wife was also greatly respected, and when she came to offer her services and state that she knew a spot near Dieppe admirably adapted to their purpose, it clenched the decision. Her devotion to the cause for which her father had laid down his life had probably more to do with her heroic offer than the natural desire to return to the scenes of her happy childhood.

Her husband having no objection to migrate, the couple arrived on the spot in disguise, equipped with large supplies of money regularly furnished by Cadoudal, who had considerable resources at his disposal. During the seven troublous years which had elapsed since Louise Le Graverend had left the country, the population had greatly changed, and there was little fear of her being recognised, as she had passed a retired girlhood, and had altered considerably in appearance owing to her camp life. She was never thought of but as the wife of the citizen Maneheu, supposed to be a well-to-do farmer driven from Lower Normandy by the civil war, and wishful to take a small farm. Bois-Guillaume was vacant, its purchaser having been unable to let it, or even farm it himself.

Pierre Maneheu was willing to take it on lease, and having ready money at his disposal, which was a rare advantage in those days, he cultivated the ground which had so long lain fallow to great profit, and passed for the most active, and perhaps wealthiest farmer in the district. The pair led a quiet rustic life, he sowing and reaping, while she looked after the cows, poultry, and farm-servants. Pierre might be seen at the neighbouring markets, but Louise scarcely ever appeared except at church. No one had the slightest idea of their secret occupations, though the nocturnal landings had commenced soon after their arrival in the country, Louise having pointed out the cleft in the rock, and arranged the signals on Penly Point, where she attended, while her husband took charge of the distant cable.

The traveller, on his arrival, was always received by Manehen, and conducted by him to the house of a confederate, some miles off, who, in his turn, the following night, passed him on to another; there were ten such refuges between Biville and Paris. The evening of George's arrival was the first time any traveller had come to Bois-Guillaume, and Louise was greatly struck by the appearance of the two pedlars who had given the pass-word, and asked her husband to receive them for a short time. She heard St. Victor expatiate on the delight of finding an old friend in the rigid figure, whose gloomy countenance, occasionally lighted up by a gleam of passion, produced a strange impression on her. But before the terrible explanation between them had been brought about by the accidental mention of the name Sourdat, the farmer's wife was already on her way to the point, following a moorland track, folding her cloak round her to conceal the lantern she carried, and bending forward to prevent her high cap from being caught by the wind.

She had been walking briskly for half-an-hour, when she suddenly stopped and said in a subdued tone: "What is it, Jacobin? What is the matter, good dog?" to her companion, a fine Danish hound, with a beautiful head and an iron-grey coat, spotted with black as evenly as a panther's skin.

He had been running in front of her, and swerving first to the right and then to the left, examining the ground, and then returning to his mistress, and she took no notice till she saw the dog, who had started off briskly, suddenly stop short, and turn his intelligent eyes to hers. She understood his pantomime and stopped also, though, owing to the gathering shades, she could not see far. She listened and caught no sound but the furze quivering in the wind. "Here, Jacobin," said she.

The dog understood the tone and bounded back, then paused again, turning his face towards the north-east, as if to confirm his first warning before coming up to his mistress, who bent down to the ground and listened before she resumed her walk, saying gently: "Well done, Jacobin, good dog, you are keeping watch. What you heard was our own people on their way to Biville cleft."

The brave animal raised his head and seemed almost to understand her words, for he soon began again to explore the heath, though principally on the right-hand side. Louise continued to advance so rapidly, that within half an hour after leaving the farm, she had reached the line of cliff. From thence she had only to follow its windings towards the west. Penly Point stood out against the horizon, and by the waning light, the courageous woman could see the English brig tacking not far from the shore.

"I shall be there in time," murmured she. "It will take Pierre nearly an hour to arrange the rope, and then these two friends from Paris seemed to have so much to say to one another, they will not reach Biville before high water." And she added in a still lower voice, as though afraid of Jacobin hearing her: "What eyes the elder man had! His look and lion-face are like M. de Brivolliers' when he charged the *blues* at the head of the king's forces."

Jacobin, this time, paid no heed; he had given up wildly careering up and down, and was quietly trotting ten paces in front of his mistress. The rocky path lay at the very brink of the cliff, and would have been dangerous for any stranger, but Louise had followed it many a time as a child, and knew every turn and bush. The night was now perfectly dark, and a single false step would have hurled her down the precipice; she took good

care not to slip on the smooth grass, but her thoughts were more occupied with her enterprise than her own danger. She knew that George Cadoudal, whose half-legendary exploits were familiar to her, though she had never yet seen him, was the passenger on the brig; he was the only man capable of restoring the king to his throne, and she felt proud to be rendering him a service.

Not having heard Liardot's conversation with St. Victor, she knew nothing of the gendarmes from Paris who were scouring the country, but was aware that any unlucky accident, such as falling in with a coast-guard, or even a belated peasant on his way back from the Dieppe market, might spoil all. She relied on the experience she had gained during the three years she had managed the signals, and still more on the marvellous sagacity of her faithful companion, Jacobin. On arriving at the point where the tiny promontory commenced, the dog looked up at her as if to ask permission to reconnoitre, and crawled along as soon as he received the sign. Within five minutes he was back again, leaping joyously around his mistress, but without barking. This meant that he had traversed Penly Point and seen nothing suspicious, so on they went, Jacobin leading the way.

The place chosen for hoisting the light was a fragment of ruined wall, the last vestige of a house once built for the use of the coast-guard, and demolished in the early days of the Revolution. Here Louise planted herself against the wall facing the sea, and scanned the horizon; the last tack of the brig had carried it out further, but the vessel was just visible by the aid of a rift in the sky.

"It will be high tide in another quarter of an hour," said she to herself, "just the time it will take the captain to put back, and the boat should not take more than twenty minutes to reach Biville creek. Pierre and the others must be there already, so I will show the white light. In ten minutes, it will be time for the red."

She was provided with a tinder-box and bundle of matches, and the lantern soon shot forth a brilliant light, which, projected on the sea by a reflector, must have instantly been perceived by the English vessel cruising on the coast, for it was distinctly visible to the group on the cliff at Biville. Louise sat down on the grass, leaning her chin on her hands, and musing, while she waited for the proper moment to hoist the red light, which would tell the English vessel that the time had come for landing his distinguished passenger.

What was she dreaming of? Her happy childhood, or the many sorrows she had known since? Her heart had bled since her return to her native country; it was not that her husband ill-treated her, or gave her any reason for jealousy, but in the complete isolation in which they now lived together, she had studied his character and made a mournful discovery. The Pierre Maneheu who had once loved her so much, and devoted himself so generously to the royalist cause, now cared for nothing but money.

In his early youth he had been swayed by a noble ardour, but the instincts of the Norman peasant, who covets, above all things, the possession of land, had suddenly come to life on the day when he found himself the owner of a large sum of money put into his hands by George Cadoudal to purchase possession of a farm to facilitate his mission. No sooner was he established at Bois-Guillaume than he began to make his farming pay; he had all the gifts necessary for success, and soon began to look forward to the day when he would be able to purchase the land he was cultivating. He was quite ready to forget that his success would be founded on the money of the

king for whom he had sworn to fight to the last, but he was too far-sighted to neglect any of the obligations he had undertaken, and braved the storms and gendarmes as often as required. He was aware that he lay entirely at George's mercy, so long as the latter remained the powerful head of his party, but he foresaw also that he was likely to come into collision with the First Consul. His plan of action was already traced; he meant to remain faithful till the catastrophe became imminent, avoid becoming involved in it, and deny the past as soon as circumstances permitted. The base intentions inspired by his avarice were still confined to his own breast, and his wife would have been the last recipient of them, still she had intuitively divined all, and possibly her husband suspected this, for he had grown cold in his manner towards her. A sullen jealousy was interwoven with these feelings; he seemed to regard the beauty and virtues of his wife as belonging to the estate as much as his sheaves and flocks. But Louise had a proud and noble spirit, which only became elevated as that of her husband declined. "Gold is like the sun, for it melts wax and hardens clay;" the saying was true in this case, where the wife clung the more ardently to the cause she held sacred, as her husband became given over to lucre. She did not hate her husband, but she had ceased to respect him, and her bruised heart was ready to admit a violent passion. And yet, that night, as she followed the revolutions of the vessel bearing Cadoudal from that rocky point, Louise Maneheu thought of nothing beyond atoning by her devotion and self-abnegation for the self-interested declension of Pierre Maneheu.

The brig must have seen the white light, for she was trying to make the coast. The tide was rapidly rising, and the waves beginning to beat at the base of the cliff, and the wind was blowing hard from the sea. This was the instant when Maneheu was explaining to St. Victor the meaning of the light on Penly Point.

"In a few minutes, the brig will put about, and then it will be time to show the red light," said Louise to herself. She drew from a pocket in her cloak a coloured glass, and without moving the lantern, made sure that this would slide in easily to change the colour of the light.

Jacobin was watching, as usual, but in the direction of the sea. The brave dog was no doubt reassured on the land side, so he had planted himself on the edge of the precipice, where he was gazing persistently at a white point, which was the sail of the brig flying over the phosphorescent surface of the waves. He was so taken up with this sight, which evidently reminded him of previous expeditions, that he did not even hear his mistress call. Probably the strong wind carried the sound of her voice away. Louise had so much faith in her companion's vigilance that she rose and came to his side.

"This is the moment," said she, softly, after watching the movements of the vessel for a few seconds. "The tide is up; Pierre and the others are at the cable, and the English vessel has just tacked." Pushing the red glass into the lantern, she hoisted it as high as her arm would reach, then lowered it rapidly, repeating her action thrice. Then she waited. The brig was close on the shore, and, in a few minutes, a green light was burning at her mast-head. "There is the reply," said she to herself, "the boat is about to put off, and in an hour General George—"

At this very moment she felt herself seized by the waist and drawn back by two strong arms. The attack was so sudden that she nearly lost her balance and dragged her assailants over the cliff. Her hands were pinioned at the same moment, and thus, before she could account for what had

happened, she found herself unable to move. Still, she did not let go the lantern, but, with extraordinary presence of mind, attempted to turn its light on her captors. But an iron grasp held her wrist and prevented her moving the lantern.

"You are caught now," she heard the man say; "do not try to move, or—"

The man's words were interrupted as suddenly as hers had been just before: Jacobin, whom the wind, blowing from the opposite quarter, had prevented from smelling or hearing the assailants, turned furiously at the first scream from his mistress, and by way of atoning for his negligence, darted at the throat of the first man he saw, who happened to be the leader of the troop. He would have been strangled, had not Louise called the dog off.

The animal obeyed the well-known accents of her clear voice, and relaxed his grip, then, dodging a kick and a bayonet thrust, he leaped back six paces, where he showed his teeth and growled, though he refrained from any fresh attack. The life of his mistress depended on his obedience and her own presence of mind, for had their leader fallen, his men would have been sure to kill her on the spot.

The leader showed his energy by at once issuing orders in a voice somewhat broken by his recent impending suffocation: "Hold her fast and take care of the lantern!"

"Here it is, Major," said the subaltern who had just snatched it from the woman's rigid fingers.

"Very well. Take care it does not go out, and hold it at arm's length till I relieve you."

"All right, Major. But that wretch of a dog may disturb us again, and with your leave, I will have him shot at once."

"Are you mad, to think of warning the English vessel and its Chouans that we are keeping the cliff by firing a gun?"

"You are right, Major. A few inches of steel will do the work best, men."

Four or five soldiers issued from the ranks, and charged the dog with their bayonets, but Jacobin was not at all inclined to be pinned to the ground; in three leaps, he was out of their reach, and had vanished into the friendly darkness overhanging Penly Point. His enemies attempted to pursue him, but finding it useless, returned to their ranks. For two minutes he reappeared at a distance, still keeping watch over Louise.

"The rascal," cried the lantern-bearer, "I would give my sergeant's stripes for the pleasure of sending a bullet through his brains!"

"Silence, Castagnol! Leave him alone and look after your lantern while I speak to the woman. Place her against the wall," said the major to the two men who held her. "There is too much wind here, and we are too near the cliff."

Louise made no resistance. She had recognised the gendarmes' uniform and surmised the state of the case; the men had obviously been attracted by the light, and as they walked in the teeth of the wind, their steps deadened by the soft moss covering the rocks, even Jacobin had not suspected their approach.

It was too late to escape, and Thomas Le Graverend's daughter had now but one thought, how to secure the safety of George Cadoudal and those awaiting him at Biville creek. She felt the best thing would be to detain the gendarmes as long as possible on Penly Point. This act of devotion

might cost her her liberty or even her life, but Louise was prepared for any sacrifice.

The soldiers placed her at the foot of the ruined wall, and received orders to relax their grasp, but to remain close behind her. The dog, crouching like a lion, ready to dart on his prey, was following every movement of his mistress, while Sergeant Castagnol held the red light aloft, illuminating the scene.

"What were you doing here when we came upon you?" asked the officer, roughly.

"I was looking for a goat that had strayed along the cliff," answered his prisoner without flinching.

"A goat! Three hours after sunset?"

"When I brought home my flock, I had not discovered it to be missing."

"Ah, and so then you said, like a careful shepherdess, I will go out with my dog and lantern, and search for it this very night?"

"Yes."

"A dog ready to strangle any one and a lantern with a red light, eh?"

"My dog only came to my rescue. If you had not touched me, he would have left you alone."

"Of course, and now you have only to explain the red light in your lantern. I knew that was the colour to irritate a bull, but I did not know it would attract goats."

"It happens to be that sort of a lantern. I did not have it made on purpose."

"Really? Is the presence of that green light on the mast of the English brig out yonder, also purely accidental?"

"I can't say."

"Oh, indeed, but I can. I am aware that the vessel which has been lying off the coast since morning, has come to land some of the Chouans, and that you are their accomplice. I know that you have just been signalling it and receiving a reply."

"The vessel you speak of cannot be trying to put in, for her head lies to the north-east, and she is not near at all."

"Yes, she is putting off because your light has disappeared. She is doubtless awaiting a fresh signal before dispatching a boat."

"I do not understand the ways of sailors," said Louise, endeavouring to assume a look of stupidity.

"Of course not, you are so taken up with your goats! But I am ready to teach you many things of which you are ignorant, and wish you to begin by giving the signal for which the English captain is waiting. I have a word to say to his passengers and do not mean him to take them back to England."

"I assure you I know nothing."

"Listen, my girl, if you mean to save your skin, for I have no time to waste in idle chatter. Whatever you may aver, I know that English vessel, would tack at once, if you were to move your lantern in some particular way."

"If you are so certain, supposing you show me how."

"Impudence will avail you nothing, for you will never be able to persuade me that you are walking about here on a night like this with a tower of lace on your head, merely to find a stray goat. You are employed by the rebels, and I have been in search of you for the last six months; now I have caught you in the act, and am empowered to deal with conspirators as I choose, so you had better believe me when I tell you that your only

means of escape is to give the signal as if we had not come on you. Well, what do you say?"

"I say again that I don't understand what you mean," said Louise, steadily.

"Miserable woman," cried the Major, "don't you know that I can have you executed on the spot?"

"You may. It would be cowardly treatment of a woman, and unjust besides, since you demand something not in my power. But you are stronger than I, and I cannot prevent your taking my life."

The officer started and seemed to hesitate a moment, but concluded that his prisoner could not take his threat seriously, so he resolved to impress upon her more forcibly the necessity for obeying. "Corporal!" cried he, turning to his company, "bring forward six men."

The Danish hound followed their movements, and suddenly sprang within four feet of the soldiers drawn up in file, disregarding their bayonets as he looked up at his mistress for permission to fly at her executioners.

"Quiet, Jacobin," said she, gently, then, addressing the officer with an unflinching voice: "Sir, asked she, will you allow me to give my dog this gold cross to take home to the farm? Our people will then know that I am dead, and come to look for my body. I am not afraid of dying, but I should like to have Christian burial."

This she said so simply that the Major instantly turned to his men and cried: "Lower arms!" Then coming up to the still impassive woman, he said, with some emotion: "You are a brave girl, and it would be a pity to carry out the full rigour of the law. I only want a pretext for setting you at liberty, and if you will make the signal, I promise to let you go at once, without even asking your name."

"I have already told you that I do not know the signal."

"No doubt you are afraid of your employers accusing you of treachery, but remember that no one will know what has happened, for I will let you return to your village and even take the lantern with you. My soldiers know how to be silent, and I shall have no interest in proclaiming that a woman has assisted me in my task."

The farmer's wife still persisted in her silence, and the officer continued in a lower tone: "Even if they should suspect you, why mind quarrelling with this set of poor conspirators? The First Consul's government is richer than all these princes put together, and can pay handsomely for any services. Help me to get rid of his enemies to-night and your fortune will soon be made; to begin with, I will buy you a thick gold chain in Dieppe to-morrow to hold that cross of yours."

"Do you imagine that a bribe will lead me to do what the threat of assassination could not effect?" asked Louise, with a haughty smile.

"Ah! Then you confess at last?" cried the officer.

"I have confessed nothing."

"Tell that to the marines, my lass. If chance had brought you hither, you would not be speaking thus. A peasant girl would have been on her knees imploring me to take her back to her village and see if she were not speaking the truth. Your silence proves your guilt, and I dare say you would find it as hard to tell me where your flock is, as your name or the farm you come from."

"You never asked me," said Louise, coldly, thinking of giving a false address to detain the officer in investigations.

But he was not to be so easily deluded, and changed his attack: "We

"shall find out where you live to-morrow," said he, "or if we cannot, we will take you on with us to Paris, where you will learn to find your tongue. You see I have abandoned my idea of piercing you through with bayonets, but you will not have gained much by that, for if it can be proved that you have been a confederate of the Chouans and English, you will be brought to justice, and little mercy will be shown even to your sex. Now give the signal or not as you choose. I know there must be one, and the brig will not wait long, for the green light is moving away."

Louise saw this too, and her heart swelled with joy, for, contrary to the Major's conjectures, this movement announced the approach of the brig to Biville creek, where George would be quietly landed while she was detaining the gendarmes at Penly Point.

"You know there is a signal, but you will not give it," resumed the officer. "Well, the English vessel may sail away with her conspirators; but they will be trying to land some other day, and I vow the coast shall be well watched. Perhaps, before they return, we may find out this precious signal. So you will gain nothing by your heroism, after all, my lass. Come," added he, lightly, "do give in! It is a mere matter of a second to raise or lower or swing the lantern. I have half a mind to try it myself. Here, Castagnol," cried he to the sergeant, "turn towards the sea, and first move the light backwards and forwards in a straight line. We will test the effect of that, and, if it does not bring back the brig, we will try some other motion."

This time, the captain had made a lucky hit. This was the signal arranged to warn the English vessel that some sudden danger had arisen and the landing must be abandoned. The signal had never yet been used, because there had been no occasion, but the English captain was sure to obey it, though contrary to the expectation of the officer of the gendarmes, it would not bring the ship round to Penly Point, but send her back to England without landing her passengers.

Louise instantly grasped the consequences of this singular incident, and saw that their landing place would be henceforth impracticable, and everything lost; she felt that the time had come to sacrifice herself and risk anything, if only she could stop Castagnol's tactics.

"Sir," said she suddenly to the officer, "I consent to do as you wish."

"Ah," said the Major, "then you have come to your senses at last?"

"Yes. Tell the soldier to give me the lantern and I will signal the vessel to put in here."

"Very well, I felt sure you would think better of it. Hand it over, Castagnol."

The sergeant obeyed, and Louise, taking the lantern, advanced to the edge of the cliff, closely followed by the officer. "Now, my good girl," said he, gleefully, "promises are not enough, you must keep your word. So give the signal at once."

"There it is," said the noble woman, dashing the lantern over the precipice.

The action was so sudden that the captain of the gendarmes failed to grasp its meaning all at once. For an instant he half hoped this might be the real signal to land, but the courageous woman herself undeceived him; instead of seeking any fresh subterfuge, she folded her arms, and said in a firm voice, standing erect, with flashing eyes: "You can kill me now. I have discharged my duty."

The disappearance of the lantern had left the scene shrouded in dark-

ness, but a flash of lightning revealed the prisoner's haughty attitude. The officer instantly grasped the state of the case, and his wrath surged like the storm overhead. "Wretch!" cried he, seizing her impassive form, and catching her up like a feather, he darted forward to hurl her over the abyss.

"My God, receive my soul," murmured she, "I must perish, but they are saved." The words were low, but they reached the alert ears of the Major, and, to his praise be it said, recalled him to himself. "The woman has a heart after all," said the rough soldier, who had not learned to kill women while serving under Bonaparte in Italy and Egypt, and setting her down, he brought her back, though somewhat roughly, to the spot where he had been trying to cajole her.

The prisoner allowed herself to be placed against the ruined wall, and was left for a few moments with her life apparently still in jeopardy. The gendarmes were standing with loaded guns and charged bayonets, only awaiting orders to proceed against the prisoner, but the Major's intentions of executing her had never been serious, and he was now bent on keeping her alive and making her a useful auxiliary, in spite of herself, against the enemies of the Consul's government.

François Robert was no common character. He had started in the army as a volunteer in 1792, and had become a sergeant at Jemmapes, a sub-lieutenant at Castiglione, a lieutenant at Rivoli, and a captain on the field of Aboukir. His father had lost his appointment and all he had during the Revolution, and the young man found himself left an orphan at the age of twenty-two, penniless, and with a young sister on his hands just come from her convent. François Robert, who had imbibed all the new ideas of the period, apprenticed his sister Gabrielle to a lace-maker who had been one of his father's old clients, and joined the army. Within eight years, General Bonaparte had made him head of a battalion the day after Marengo and promoted him to be an ordnance officer. The next year he received the command of a troop in the picked gendarmerie, and Mademoiselle Gabrielle Robert was attached in the capacity of reader to the household recently formed by Josephine, wife of the First Consul.

The brother and sister owed all their fortune to the young chief who at that time represented the triumphant democracy, and repaid him by a boundless devotion; François Robert was ready to lay down his life for his General, and had already sacrificed the glorious military career opening before him that he might watch over his hero's safety by entering the gendarmerie. In this new sphere, he developed talents that had not been previously suspected. But though he was ready to undertake secret missions and had no scruple in consulting Fouché when necessary, he remained a brave and magnanimous officer, incapable of any base conduct. He was ready enough to spare Louise, but intended at the same time to make her useful, so, controlling his anger, he assumed a light tone and said gaily:

"Well, you are certainly a smart girl, and have managed to trick me as if I had been a conscript. Your manœuvre with the lantern has succeeded admirably, for the English vessel is sailing away, whereas your friends the Chouans would have been landing at the foot of the cliff by this time, had Castagnol continued his signal. But never mind, it will be my turn next, and you will help me."

"You are mistaken," said Louise coolly. "I shall not speak, even if you torture me."

"All right, my girl, I know you now, and shall not waste my time in threats. I have better means at my disposal."

The prisoner shrugged her shoulders, but made no reply.

"I might let two gendarmes walk you about the country and soon learn where you come from," resumed the Major, "but I do not mean to take that trouble. I shall just carry you off to Paris, where you will find yourself locked up till you choose to become more communicative."

Louise could not help starting. "Yes," pursued Robert, "I daresay you would rather not travel, and that you object to the escort I offer you. A pretty young woman like you is not likely to wish to leave the country without saying a word to anybody; you have probably a husband or lover somewhere, and he will never know what has become of you."

"I have already said that you can do what you like with me," said Pierre Maneheu's wife.

"Just so, and I choose to send you in the first place to Dieppe, where you will find temporary quarters in our barracks. To-morrow I shall join you after finishing my business here, and we will proceed to the capital together. You will have nothing to regret, since you have saved your friends, who are now on their way back to England. See, the English vessel has put out her green light."

Louise turned round and could not suppress her satisfaction, for the disappearance of the green light which the officer took for the signal to sail, told her that the boat had returned after landing its passenger. She calculated that George Cadondal must already have found time to scale the cliff, and that the Chouans would not linger on the spot, so that even if the officer were to proceed at once to Biville creek, he would arrive too late.

Louise thanked God in her heart and prepared to follow the gendarmes without resistance. Her only anxiety was about her husband, whom she supposed she was leaving behind; still she hoped he would guess what had happened on the headland, when he did not see her return. She knew he could secure his own safety, and trusted that he might even find out his lost wife and try to rescue her from her persecutors.

"Castagnol!" cried the officer. "Take six men and convey this woman to Dieppe. If she attempts to escape, you may fire on her, and I shall not forbid you to bind her hands."

"No need to do that, Major," returned the sergeant, "but that dog is a great nuisance, and with your leave, now that the Chouans are out of hearing, I should like to send a bullet through his head."

Robert was on the point of sanctioning this when an idea struck him, and drawing the sergeant aside, he said in a low voice: "Refrain from touching the dog; the animal has a keen scent and may be useful to me later on."

Castagnol unloaded his gun, though not without inwardly abusing the strange indulgence of his chief, who chose to spare the creature against whom he himself felt some animosity for his attack, but, as he never ventured to dispute an order, he replied in a tone of some vexation: "Very well, Major. The wretched animal shall be spared. Must we feed him too when we get to the barracks?"

"Oh," said Robert, "you can lodge him with his mistress. It will merely be one prisoner extra."

"Thank you, sir," said Louise gently, having overheard the close of the dialogue.

"For what? For not committing a useless act of cruelty? Do you take me for an ogre? Well, perhaps you may find out that I am better than I seem. There are brave men beside those who serve under George. I have been fighting for France the last ten years and never hurt a child, woman, or dog, nor am I going to begin now."

Louise made no reply, but could not help being struck by the half respectful tone in which the officer now addressed her.

"You will be taken to Dieppe, where you will be kindly treated," resumed the Major. "To-morrow I shall call for you and take you on to Paris, unless in the meantime you make up your mind to disclose to me who sent you off to Penly Point, or indeed merely the name of the person who supplied that lantern with its various coloured glasses."

"The lantern was my own, and I had gone to look for my goat."

"Very well, I am not going to raise that point again. In a few days you can repeat your story to the minister of police, and as to your lantern, it will be easy to find it on the shore. I have secured you, and that is all I want. So good-bye for the present." Then, turning to the sergeant, he added: "Now be off, Castagnol, and keep your eyes open if I am to mention you in my report."

Castagnol had already placed his prisoner between four soldiers, with two in front as a van-guard, while he himself marched in the rear. Louise still maintained her air of quiet resignation, and Jacobin followed his mistress at a respectful distance, after barking loudly at the captain as a farewell demonstration. Up to this moment, he had evidently been restrained by an instinct of prudence.

Robert remained for an instant motionless, playing with the sash of his sabre as he followed the progress of the vanishing group. His experience had lighted on a fresh sensation, and he had been much impressed by the bearing of his prisoner.

"This Cadoudal inspires the greatest devotion," muttered he between his teeth. "What more could I, an old trooper, do for the First Consul, than this peasant-woman has done for this conspirator? It is plain that she would have let herself be shot rather than say a word. Well, of course, she must have some lover among his followers; still, I doubt whether the grand ladies gathered round Madame Bonaparte at Malmaison would be as ready to sacrifice themselves for their suitors."

He paused and then added: "I know one at Malmaison, however, who is brave enough. To be sure, she is my sister, and takes after her father, who feared nothing, lawyer though he was."

The Major then ordered his company to wheel half round, and placed himself at the head of the little column led by Corporal Barbot. His intention was to strike across the heath for the chance of coming on other loiterers now that the vessel had sailed away, and he endeavoured to direct his steps to the plain and the disused quarry which had sheltered St. Victor's men.

The night was very dark, and the wind had become almost a hurricane, whilst a few large raindrops announced the beginning of a deluge, but still the enthusiastic officer pressed forward with his well-disciplined soldiers, till, at last, blinded by the rain which beat unmercifully into their faces, and stumbling in the darkness over the uneven ground, they were forced to pause, and instead of advancing, form into a dense square, lowering their heads and drawing in their elbows, as if preparing to receive a charge of cavalry. Their commander's exhortations and threats were

fruitless, no men could have stood the torrents now descending, and they were forced to seek shelter, if any were to be found. Barbot announced that he could see a faint light some three hundred paces before them, and towards it, by the Major's orders, they directed their steps.

In five minutes they found themselves standing before a hedge enclosing some farm, but it was too high to allow them to see the light, or even the house inside. Robert was too prudent not to be circumspect in approaching a place which might be frequented by Chouans; he cautiously followed the line of hedge, followed by his troop, and soon came against the boughs of some projecting apple-trees covered with fruit, which indicated the neighbourhood of a farm. On reaching the gate which led into the yard, he was surprised to find it open, and to hear no noise within the precincts, not even the barking of a dog. The place would have seemed uninhabited had not the light described in the distance by Corporal Barbot reappeared, glimmering through a window on the ground floor, as if it might be the flickering of a fire on the hearth.

Such carelessness about their property on the part of the inhabitants is very unusual among the prudent inhabitants of Normandy, and made Robert suspicious, so he paused to listen, but the roaring wind would have prevented his hearing any other sound, had there been any. His only course was to enter by force or stratagem, and find a shelter for his men, who, being twelve in number and well armed, seemed to have little to fear in entering a poor farm-house. Still he was on his guard against a snare, for they might have lighted on a nest of Chouans, and peasants, even if not conspirators, might object to receiving a nocturnal visit from a body of armed men. Robert, as usual on perilous occasions, was ready to risk his own person.

"Barbot," said he to his corporal, "break the ranks and let the men enter the yard. I don't know what we shall find in this place, but we must act as if there were an enemy. Let your men advance gently, one by one, and plant themselves against the house with their guns loaded. Then, if any one should fire through the windows, they will be safe. I shall knock at the door, and seeing me alone, it will be opened. If the peasant seems friendly, I shall ask for shelter for us all. If he is churlish, you must force your way in at the point of your bayonets when I cry 'Forward!' and then we shall see what can be done."

"All right, Major. But supposing the man will not open?"

"Then you must break in the door with the butt end of your guns. But I would rather have things done quietly, so we must not frighten them. Mind, no noise till I call you."

"We will be as mute as fish, which is a suitable expression, as we have been under the water for the last quarter of an hour, Major. Only I cannot answer for sneezes," muttered the facetious corporal.

"Four days' solitary confinement to the first man who sneezes," returned the officer. "I know no better way of euring troopers' colds."

The gendarmes had heard all these instructions, though they were given in a low tone, for they had formed a circle round their leader, so all that Barbot had to add was: "Let six of you file to the right, and six to the left. Cross the court, and place yourselves close against the wall on either side of the door. I shall remain in the rear to keep an eye on you. Have your wits about you if you want to save your skin and lie on good clean straw by the fireside, instead of taking a bath in the mud outside."

This short harangue had its effect, and the men crossed the yard noise-

lessly, the thick coating of manure, which, as usual in Normandy, lay on its surface, deadening their approach. Barbot took care to plant himself close to the door, where he would be ready to assist his officer or receive the first blows.

The lighted window was almost on a level with the yard, and Robert once thought of mounting on the shoulders of one of his men to look in, but reflecting that this might slightly compromise his dignity and would only lose time, he walked straight up the worn steps in front of the door. Before knocking, he put his ear to the mouldering wood, and heard nothing but the crackling of the fire. He looked through the key-hole, and saw nothing but the flicker of its light on a stone floor. He might have thought the room was empty, but as he knew that peasants never leave wood burning when they go to bed, he felt sure that some person must be there, though alone.

This was re-assuring, and Robert was about to knock, when his fingers fell on the latch, which yielded instantly to the pressure. The door swung back and disclosed a long room with a table and dresser, and a man seated on a stool with his feet on the fire-dogs, warming himself by the fire. Only his back was visible, but Robert could see that the figure was tall and stalwart. In the dim light it would have been difficult to distinguish whether he was dressed like a farmer or a wood-cutter, but whatever he might be, a solitary man could give little cause for alarm to an officer who had a dozen soldiers close at hand.

The Major was never one to hesitate, so grasping his sabre in his right hand, he threw the door back, and marched straight up to the occupant of the room.

The man turned, sprang up, and confronted the officer with a pistol in each hand. "Advance another step and I fire," said he.

His voice produced an effect which should not have resulted from this energetic threat. It arrested François Robert, and made him exclaim: "What, Sourdats! Can this be you?"

"The Major!" murmured Liardot.

"The very same. Delighted to meet you here, where I expected something very different. But what in the world are you doing?"

"Warming myself, as you see, Major."

"Just what brought me here, for I am soaked from head to foot. We were caught in the storm a mile or two from here."

"I was more fortunate, for I only got the first drops which decided me on turning in here for shelter."

"With your men?"

"No, Major. I sent them on to Tréport, where they are to separate before returning to Paris, and I should have been on the way myself to Dieppe, if I had not fixed to meet you at the quarry by daybreak to-morrow."

"Ah, quite true. I remember we were to meet there, but I did not expect to find you there alone."

"Those fellows I had enlisted were of no further use, and if they had stayed here much longer, their faces would have attracted the attention of the peasantry, so I thought it best to dismiss them. I dare say you have done the same with your gendarmes?"

"No, they are all there in the yard, except half-a-dozen whom I have despatched under command of my sergeant. I am reminded that I must not leave them drenching outside, but before I call them in, tell me whose house this is?"

Liardot had to disguise a nervous start, but succeeded in replying calmly :
 " 'Pon my word, Major, that's more than I can tell you."

"Impossible !"

"Just as I have the honour of stating. Only think, I had no sooner dismissed my escort, who were of no further use since the English vessel had sailed away."

"Oh, so you saw —."

"The green light she hoisted mast-high and extinguished after half an hour? Certainly I did. I am possessed of accurate information as to their signals, and saw at once that she must have failed in landing her passenger, probably because there was no answering signal from the coast. The light you saw on Penly Point had disappeared before we reached Biville creek ; by the way, did you succeed in catching the lantern-bearer ?"

"I will tell you about that directly, Sourdats. First finish the story of how you got here from the cliff. That will help me to guess in what sort of a house I have found you so unexpectedly."

"Well, as I was telling you, Major, after dismissing my recruits, I turned my steps towards the quarry, thinking of passing the rest of the night on the spot where I was to meet you. Unfortunately I lost my way on the moor, and the storm came on and made matters worse. I walked on blindly and should probably have fallen into a bog, had I not stumbled against the gate which you must have found open. I did not know where I was, but the prospect of staying out all night in the rain was by no means alluring, so I knocked at this door, and, receiving no answer, walked in. There was a little fire on the hearth, so I blew it up and lighted a brand in order to explore the next floor, where I found two empty rooms. As I could make nothing out, I piled some wood on the fire below and was quietly warming myself till it was light enough to go and meet you at the quarry, which cannot be far from here. But I cannot understand the meaning of this deserted house ; we might be in Sleeping Beauty's castle."

"Or rather in a haunt of Chouans ; I mistrust this sequestered spot."

"Oh, what can make you think—"

"Nothing in particular. But anyway, I am going to provide against being surprised." And running to the door, the officer summoned the corporal, who promptly appeared.

"We are lucky, Barbot," said he. "There is no one here but Sourdats, an old acquaintance of mine ; still, we must be on our guard. Make a survey of the out-houses and barn, and go round the orchard ; if you see nothing suspicious, close the gate and post a sentinel whom you can relieve every hour, and then go and lie down on the hay in the loft with your men, but do not sleep too soundly."

"Ah, Major," cried Barbot, "hay is famous for a bed, but a fire is a better thing to dry one."

Robert felt strongly inclined to respond to this suggestion by ordering his subaltern to the guard-room for eight days, but he knew him and his ways of old. The Egyptian, as his comrades called him in allusion to his campaigns in the land of the Pharaohs, always began by protesting, but never failed to obey most faithfully, so the officer contented himself with saying :

"You could not all find room here, and besides, I want to have a little private conversation with my friend Sourdats. But if you want to warm yourself, you can light a fire."

"All right, Major. I have seen the farmer's store of wood under the

shed where he keeps his cart. So I will just make my rounds and post my sentinel, and in ten minutes, we shall have a fire to roast an ox."

"Go, and be cautious," said Robert, closing the door.

"Do you know, you gave me a false alarm, Major?" resumed Sourdats, when he found himself alone over the fire with the leader of the gendarmes.

"You alarmed? You did not look much like it with your pistols and prompt challenge. You may handle a pen in Fouché's service now, but it is easy to see you have been an old Chouan and have not forgotten their ways."

"It is only true," sighed the supposed clerk; "I have done as many others did in my day, but you know I have seen the error of my ways since."

"Oh, yes, it is well known that you belong to us now, and you are right, Sourdats, for I can tell you that so long as Bonaparte lives, your Count of Provence has little chance of reascending what his party term the throne of his ancestors, and I, for my part, shall take good care they don't kill my General."

"You did a good stroke of business, to-night, I think, Major."

"Better even than you think."

"It was a fine thing at any rate to prevent that vessel from landing her passengers. Who knows but Cadoudal himself may have been among them, and his ill-luck to-night will be enough to disgust him with the sea for some time to come."

"I rather hope so, especially as in future we shall keep a strict watch on this coast, where he has evidently confederates. I should like to find out their nest before returning to Paris, for if we do not nab them now—"

Sourdats was following this argument with marked attention, but the Major, instead of concluding it, suddenly cried:

"Why, here I think I have it!" With these words, he darted upon a lantern on the mantleshef of which he had suddenly caught sight.

"Whatever is it?" asked Liardot, changing colour.

"Why, a lantern, to be sure," said Robert, holding it out to the fire-light. "A lantern precisely similar to that the woman used for signalling from the cliff. Look at the reflectors and different coloured glasses, all perfect. Oh! these Chouans take every precaution, and keep duplicates of all they require."

And, glancing around, the Major added: "This is evidently the very nest I was in search of, and I am not surprised now that we found the house deserted. The conspirators must be all prowling about the coast, but they are sure to return to their den presently, and they will find a warm reception. Sourdats, my good fellow, they cannot escape us this time."

Sourdats, or rather Liardot, was experiencing the most painful emotions. After parting with his companions on the brink of the cliff, he had come straight to the farm, not to take shelter, as he had said, but to learn whether the farmer's wife had been arrested.

He wisely concluded that if, by some miracle, Louise had succeeded in escaping from the gendarmes, she would seek refuge at once in the house where she must expect her husband to be awaiting her. In that case, he wished to inform her of Maneheu's sudden departure and furnish her with the means of joining him in Paris. If, on the other hand, he did not find her at Bois-Guillaume, it would be a proof that she had fallen into the hands of the gendarmes, and he might then hope to meet her in the quarry with the officer.

He remembered likewise that when he and St. Viator had quitted the low room after their stormy explanation, neither had troubled himself about closing the gate or door of the deserted house. The farm servants whom Maneheu had sent to their homes when he started for Biville creek would be sure to come back at daybreak in order to begin their work, and would at once discover the absence of both master and mistress. The following day, therefore, the news of their strange disappearance would be bruited abroad, and might even reach the ears of Major Robert, if he had not left Dieppe. The house was sure to be visited by the police, and this visit might lead to disastrous consequences, if Maneheu, as might be feared, had kept any papers of a compromising nature about him.

After weighing all these contingencies, Liardot had determined to pass the night at Bois-Guillaume, and if Louise did not reappear, look through the cupboards and remove anything suspicious he might find there.

The plan was well conceived, only he had no time to execute it. He had only half lied when telling his story to the leader of the gendarmes, for, though it was untrue that he had lighted on the farm by chance, he had really lost his way on the moor, and thus had been barely twenty minutes warming himself on the hearth when the officer entered and so prevented his search.

He reproached himself bitterly with having waited to dry his clothes, and, above all, with having neglected to examine the objects around him, when Robert at once pounced upon a tell-tale article. He had self-control enough, however, to conceal his agitation, and determined to keep cool to the end.

There was no longer any doubt that Louise Maneheu had been arrested at Penly Point, but her husband had affirmed that nothing on earth would make her speak, and Liardot, who was skilled in physiognomy, augured well of the young woman's character from the slight glimpse he had caught of her. All was not therefore lost: the farm would of course be denounced to the police; still George Cadoudal was on French soil, and the other important persons who were to follow him later on would be able to land on some other part of the coast.

His worst fear was lest the farmer might have left behind him any letters received from London, especially the last, which spoke of George's probable arrival. Liardot could only wait for some providential inspiration that might enable him to prevent the captain from ransacking the whole house.

"Well, I must own I am lucky," resumed Robert with great delight. "All I have now to do is to wait here till daybreak. The trap is set, and our rats will run in of themselves during the night. What a figure we shall cut, Sourdut, when we return to Paris with all these villains for whom the minister has been hunting so long, instead of bringing a woman for our sole captive as I feared!"

"A woman?" asked Liardot, feigning the greatest astonishment.

"Yes, one who was making signals on the point with the counterpart of this lantern. I caught her in the very act, and she is now on her way to the barracks at Dieppe, to wait till I can take her to Paris. She was to have gone alone, and now she will have the good luck of her friends' company."

"Then she spoke, and told you that this farm—"

"She would say nothing. She is a fanatic who would die rather than open her lips."

Liardot breathed more freely.

"But I can afford to dispense with her confidences now," continued the officer, "for this lantern tells me all. My handsome prisoner must be the wife or daughter of the Chouan who owns or occupies this farm."

"If so, Major, how was it you did not surprise the father or husband likewise? She could never have been sent by herself to the assistance of any Chouans about to land."

"Why, Sourdat, you do not show your usual keen intelligence. Of course the men must have been concealed in some of the rocks below the cliff, while this intrepid Amazon was flourishing her lantern above! But as they saw the English vessel sail away, they are not likely to stay there till to-morrow, so I expect to see them here soon. I shall take proper measures not to scare them away, and will tell my corporal presently to post his sentinel inside the gate and put out his bivouac fire. But, first of all, I will go round the rooms above, and you shall accompany me. I am sure we shall make some interesting discoveries."

"Perhaps so," answered Sourdat calmly, "but we should have to take a light with us. Don't you think the owners would be likely to retrace their steps if they caught sight of a candle flitting about their upper rooms?"

"Ah! I had not thought of that."

"Perhaps we should even go well to throw some ashes on this fire, which gives out too much light."

"It certainly does, for without it, I should never have found the house. But it is easy for you to talk, you are dry, while I am still soaking from head to foot."

"Oh, then, dry yourself first, Major," said Sourdat, who was merely trying to gain time. "If you were to get pleurisy, you would be doing the Chouans a greater service than if you failed to capture them, for they can never succeed in any attempt on the person of the First Consul so long as you are there to watch over him."

"Yes, I shall take care of him," returned Robert as he seated himself by the fire, "but if George were in Paris, I should have my work before me."

"Fortunately he is not, and will never get there either, now that you have made this capture and mean to take the woman to Paris."

"I hope to have her accomplices to take too, if they only run their heads into our net."

Liardot had no anxiety on this score, for he knew that Maneheu would not return, and that St. Victor had given his men orders to disperse; but he was still vainly racking his brains for some pretext that might prevent the search, when Robert stood up, saying:

"Well, I am nearly dry now, and must risk congestion of the lungs sooner than neglect my duty. I will just give my orders to Barbot, and then get you to help me in inspecting these rooms."

"Major," cried the supposed clerk, "just look at that glare!—do you hear that sound?—it seems as if the house were on fire."

"Fire!" repeated the officer. "Impossible! Who could have done it? And yet the glow is increasing, it looks as light as day outside. Can that creature, Barbot, in lighting his pipe, actually— If I thought so, he should suffer for it."

"We had better go and see," said Liardot, delighted with this opportunity for putting off the official inspection.

Robert had already opened the door, and the supposed Sourdat had only

time to spring after him. An unexpected scene awaited them in the yard, where the corporal and his men had been suddenly aroused by the fire kindled by their own carelessness, and were now flitting wildly to and fro.

The benumbed soldiers, in their haste to warm themselves, had piled up in one corner logs enough to roast an ox, never thinking of the hay-loft which lay above. In another half-hour, while they were all snoring soundly, a spark had caught the trusses of hay stored above, and the flame spread like lightning. To crown the misfortune, the loft adjoined the upper storey of the farmhouse, and this, being built of timber and thatched with straw, took fire at once. The night had been warm, and the rain which fell scarcely supplied the want of fire-engines, while the north-west wind served to fan the flames.

By the time Major Robert and Sourdat appeared on the scene, the fire had risen to a hopeless pitch, much to the latter's delight, as he saw that any compromising papers must shortly perish, but the officer was half beside himself with fury, and nearly ready to strangle Barbot.

"Wretch! Villain!" cried he, grasping him by the collar, "you shall pay for this. I shall bring you before a court-martial when we get back to Paris."

"It was not my fault, Major, but the dryness of the hay," said Barbot, imperturbable as usual under both abuse and threat.

"You should have chosen some other place for lighting your fire."

"You had given me leave to take the men under shelter."

"I never told you to put them just under a loft."

"Well, Major, I thought we were in the enemy's country, and never troubled my head about the property of a Chouan, and no one else would live in such a hole as this." Possibly Robert understood that his man would always have the last word, so he released him and hastened to the burning house.

"Where are you going, Major?" said Sourdat, seizing him by his tunic. "Don't you see that it is useless to expose your life by trying to enter? The roof and floor may give way at any moment, and if there were ever any interesting papers, there cannot be a vestige of them left now."

"It is too true. But to think that if I had not stayed talking, I might have possessed myself of the rogues' secrets!"

"It is very doubtful, for the Chouans hardly ever write, and take good care not to leave their letters about. But what further proofs can you need, since you have caught the woman?"

"I have caught her certainly, but who knows whether I can make her speak? Besides, what are we to do now? Camp out in this wind?"

"It will be useless to stay here, for if the occupants of this house are on the moor, the light of the conflagration will warn them either to keep away altogether or to approach so cautiously as to see us and take flight."

"Then, where in the world would you have us go?"

"To Dieppe. The storm is passing over, and the rain has almost ceased. We cannot be far from the high road, and the light of the flames will help us to find it. Your men would rather march an hour or two longer and reach their barracks than spend the night here."

"Upon my word, Sourdat," said the Major, after a minute's reflection, "I believe you are right. Our expedition has come to an end for the present, and it is time for us to return to town. Besides, I am anxious to see my prisoner and show her to you."

"What, would you have me speak to her?"

"By all means. Why should that surprise you?"

"Not at all, but—"

"What then?"

Sourdat was in no haste to reply, and in spite of himself, could not help betraying a little embarrassment. Remembering that Louise Maneheu had not been present during his explanation with St. Victor, nor at the scene in the quarry which had so triumphantly demonstrated his innocence, she would, probably, take him for a traitor on seeing the pedlar, whom she had received at her farm as a friend, reappear in the company of the commander of the gendarmes. Her first impulse might be to reproach him publicly with his treason, and this must certainly be obviated.

"I think I had better not see this woman till we get to Paris," at length suggested Sourdat, who had now recovered his composure. "To begin with, I have no time to lose in Dieppe, besides which, an idea has just occurred to me which I should like to put before Fouché. If nothing is to be extorted from the woman by threats or severity, I might succeed in making her speak by employing gentler means. She does not know me, and were I to pass myself off as a Chouan—"

"I understand," exclaimed the Major, "you are certainly deeper than I am, Sourdat. I should not like to undertake the task myself, nor is it my duty to loosen women's tongues, but no doubt Fouché will relish your suggestion, and obtain a full confession by this means. You had better get to Paris as quickly as you can; I shall join you there in a few days, for I must travel by stages with my prisoner, while you will probably take the diligence."

"To-morrow morning, if I can find a seat. I need not tell you that I shall ask Fouché for an audience as soon as I arrive, and acquaint him with the important capture you have made."

"And I shall mention the assistance you have rendered me," said Robert. "Barbot," cried he, "muster your men. We need not stay here."

No sooner had he given this order than the roof of the house fell in with a terrible crash, and a sheaf of flame rose into the sky, lighting up the surrounding country, till all disappeared in a thick cloud of smoke. The fire-bell on the belfry of Biville now began to clang.

"March," cried the officer. "The neighbouring peasants will be on the spot soon, and I do not care to have to enter into explanations with them, nor to be taken for a fire-brigade."

III.

TOWARDS noon on the morrow of this eventful night, many animated groups of citizens were standing in front of the main gate of the ancient castle which still raises its battlements and towers on the west side of the town of Dieppe. In those days it was used as the gendarmerie barracks, and within its precincts Sergeant Castagnol had lodged his female prisoner.

In spite of the order for secrecy, news of an important capture on Biville cliff had soon spread through the town, for most of the gendarmes were married, and their wives could not hold their tongues. Report had magnified facts, into a belief in a terrible encounter with the Chouans, who were said to have been defeated, and to have put out to sea after losing

many men, and leaving others prisoners. Some were ready to assert that George Cadoudal had been arrested, disguised as a woman, and that he would be taken to Paris that very morning dressed in a female's cap and skirt. People had been waiting for hours to see him depart, and were kept on the tiptoe of expectation by the presence of a few of the picked gendarmes mounting guard round a carriage and pair.

The vehicle was rather an old ramshackle affair; it stood not far from the entrance to the barracks, and though neither coachman nor postilion appeared, it was surmised that their places might be supplied by the picked gendarmes, whose varied talents were generally recognised.

An order from the First Consul would despatch these men, sometimes in uniform, sometimes in plain dress, to hunt down one of the gangs that then infested the departments of France, or sometimes to carry secret supplies to the West or South, to a remote part of Brittany, or to the troops serving in Italy. Wherever they were seen, it might be taken for granted that some difficult and dangerous mission had been accomplished, so their appearance in the quiet town of Dieppe announced some important juncture.

They had only come down by diligence the previous afternoon, and alighting before they reached the town, had proceeded at once through the forest to the coast, returning before daybreak to the barracks, so that nothing was known about their expedition till it was all over.

The storm of the night had been followed by a fresh sunny day, which tempted many to lounge about, and both men and women of all classes were assembled. Among them were three men, standing as close to the carriage as the gendarmes would permit, and occasionally exchanging a few words in a low tone; they kept sufficiently apart from their neighbours not to be overheard, and being probably unknown, attracted no attention in a crowd looking forward to an interesting sight.

The oldest of the trio was short and thick set, with broad shoulders, and wore a long grey coat, leather breeches, riding boots, and a three-cornered hat. The others had swallow-tailed coats, trimmed with metal buttons, round hats with wide drooping brims, nankcen breeches, and Hessian boots. But though they were dressed alike, they differed greatly in feature and figure. The one was a tall, lank, ungainly fellow, with a long pale face, framed in twisted locks of fair hair. His tall figure kept swaying to and fro, and his long arms swung perpetually from side to side, making him look like a windmill in the distance. His companion, on the other hand, looked like a finished cavalier. He had blue eyes and white teeth, brown hair cropped and curled, and a clean shaven face, and, with his erect carriage, looked handsome and elegant even in the ridiculous dress of the period.

No one who had met St. Victor, George's lieutenant, with Tamerlane and Malabry, his men, in their military dress the evening before, would have recognised them under their present array, and the citizens of Dieppe were far from suspecting that here, in front of the barracks, they were elbowing three of those terrible Chouans whose audacious attempts were the present topic of discussion throughout the town. And yet it was St. Victor who was walking about the square in front of the castle, light-hearted as ever, accompanied by the two comrades who had agreed to help him in delivering Louise Manehen.

They had found refuge with an innkeeper who had once been a Chouan, and though now retired from active service, still felt some zeal in the

royalist cause; through this ally, they had soon learned that a woman had been arrested and was to be sent on to Paris that very day, and thanks to St. Victor's promptitude and money, they were ready by noon to follow her; the costumes they now wore had been purchased for ready money, and so had a carriage and horses.

This carriage was in waiting at the end of a long street adjoining the high road, under the care of the innkeeper, and the three friends were only watching to see that prepared for Louise and her guard before them on the road. They had been standing about for nearly an hour when a tall figure appeared in the castle gateway, whom, in spite of his changed dress, St. Victor instantly recognised, though he had only seen him by twilight in the quarry for a minute the night before.

"The time is near at hand," said he in a subdued tone. "Here comes the commander of the gendarmes to inspect the carriage and make sure it will not break down on the road."

"What commander? Where do you see an officer?" asked Tamerlane.

"Under the cloak of that great loon there, almost as tall as yourself and twice as broad. Cannot your sharp eyes recognise beneath those clothes the man who arrived last night just at the right moment to save our friend Liardot, whom I was about to have shot?"

"Ah, I see. Yes, he has just the bearing of that cut-throat of Bonaparte's who fell upon us from the clouds to alter the situation, like Jupiter at the close of a Greek tragedy."

"I see what you are driving at, Tamerlane. A classical quotation about a god from Olympus is to follow next. Spare us, and attend to our own tragedy, which may possibly end in a military execution or the guillotine!—Look there now! Citizen Robert,—I learned his name from Liardot,—is examining the carriage springs and the horses' legs. He assumes the airs of a connoisseur, and might be some nobleman anxious to test whether his conveyance can carry him safely back to his estate."

"The fellow is substantially built," muttered Malabry, "still, if I had him in a corner, I believe I could throttle him."

"Though I do not despair of procuring you that pleasure, I am unable to promise it you. It all depends on the way he means to travel. If the whole detachment is to escort him, you will have to renounce your hopes of wringing his neck."

"The hypothesis is untenable," said Tamerlane, who could not refrain from introducing his flowery expressions into this simple dialogue. "The man is either going to travel in the carriage, in which case his soldiers cannot accompany him on foot, or else he means to keep with his troop and cannot require the carriage. What do you say to this dilemma?"

"That your rhetoric wearies me, and instead of arguing, I wish you would tell me whether you saw anything of Liardot at the coach-office where I sent you?"

"More than that. I saw him take his seat in the *coupé*, and he has been rolling towards Rouen for the last three hours at least."

"I hope you abstained from speaking to him publicly?"

"What do you take me for? We merely exchanged a look of intelligence; he recognised me at once in my new costume, and I believe he even frowned to express his astonishment at seeing me within the walls of Dieppe. I am aware that, as a matter of fact, the town has no walls, but I employ a figure of speech known to grammarians as—"

"A truce to you and your grammar! Cannot you open your lips with-

out playing the pedant? But now we are sure that Liardot is gone and George also on his way to Paris, we have only to think how we may rescue this brave girl who saved us all last night. We can never leave such a pretty heroine in the hands of these boors."

"What, she is pretty, is she? I might have thought as much when I found you so anxious to protect her. Oh, I see we are embarking on a perilous enterprise."

"You need not fancy me smitten with this Norman peasant. I must have spent my life like you, in scribbling at a college desk and roaming about the woods with the Chouans, before I could fall in love with a woman who does not know how to arrange her hair in the classic style, and wears a steeple on her head instead of a yellow helmet bonnet! Those bonnets are all the rage at the Elysée and Frascati's; I dote on them, my dear fellow; so how could I ever be smitten with a woman who wears a lace cap?"

Tamerlane would doubtless have replied by some poetical quotation, if Malabry had not nudged his elbow to notice what was going on near the earriage. A man had just mounted the box and taken the reins. The Major was giving him orders, and glancing meanwhile at the castle gateway. It was easy to see from these signs that they were about to start, and a murmur of satisfaction ran through the crowd.

"I would bet anything that that fellow cracking his whip is a gendarme in disguise," said St. Victor.

"Another proof that the carriage will have no escort," replied Tamerlane. "If the whole of the detachment were to accompany it, the officer and soldier we see there would not have doffed their uniforms."

"I begin to think that the delightful Major actually means to travel without any retinue like a country squire, in which case, all will go well. Is everything ready?"

"Yes. The carriage is waiting just outside, and the innkeeper will look after it till we come."

"And you will answer for the horses?"

"As I would for myself. I have seen them, and will answer for their doing more than forty miles a day for the next month. Give them double rations and they will do sixty."

"That would be double what we require. Are you sure that this other carriage will pass the suburbs where our friend is awaiting us?"

"Quite sure. There are three roads to Paris, but they all unite before reaching the first house in the suburbs."

"Well, then, my lad, you know what we are to do. Let this carriage pass on and follow it quietly on foot till we reach the place where ours stands waiting. Then Tamerlane and I will get inside, and you will mount on the box and drive on. You will soon be able to overtake the officer; keep five hundred yards behind him all the way, so that we may reach the first night's halting-place ten minutes after our gendarme and his prisoner. The rest you may leave to me."

"Here comes the handsome captive," cried Tamerlane, and Louise Maneheu was seen advancing between two men, evidently gendarmes, though not in uniform. She had laid aside her cap, and drawn the hood of her cloak over her head, so as nearly to conceal her face. Her step was firm and she seemed perfectly at ease.

"The fellow has a little grace," muttered St. Victor, "he has spared her the hand-cuffs."

It was easy to see that Louise's hands were unfettered, for she was using them to caress Jacobin, who was gambolling joyously around her.

"And he has left her her dog," added Tamerlane.

"Certainly this servant of the usurper's is not very hard-hearted," rejoined St. Victor.

Meanwhile the crowd was pressing closer to gain a view of the prisoners whose capture had been so much talked about. Disappointed mutters and exclamations of surprise arose on finding there was no one but a woman in the hands of the gendarmes, but, to the credit of the town be it said, not a single cry was raised against the prisoner herself.

The major put her into the carriage, and then seated himself by her side. The two men who had escorted her occupied the front seat, a gendarme closed the door, and the driver whipped up his horses. Jacobin barked to assure his mistress that he was following, and kept springing up as he ran by the side of the carriage in hopes of catching sight of her.

St. Victor had pressed forward so close that the wheels grazed his clothes. The carriage windows were down and his eyes met those of Louise Mancheu; a flash of intelligence showed that he had been recognised, and he put his finger to his lips. The carriage passed on, but the sign had been understood.

Louise's three friends continued to follow among the crowd, but at a moderate pace, for they were anxious not to attract observation, and it was not till they had left the last house behind them that Malabry said to the others: "Sans-Peur is waiting for us in the by-road on the left." Sans-Peur was the name borne in former days by the Chonan who now kept the inn.

"Let us make haste," replied St. Victor; "we have lost sight of the carriage and must not let it get too far ahead."

They quickened their steps and found standing between the edges of a narrow lane a kind of open car, which looked anything but imposing, but was obviously a very light weight for the two large Norman horses which Sans-Peur had attached to it.

"Have you seen them?" asked Malabry.

"They have just passed at a smart pace," replied the landlord, "but with these animals you can overtake them as soon as you please."

"Which road did they take?"

"The Neufchâtel road; but when they reach Arques they will probably turn to the right and keep on to Forges. That is the shortest cut to Paris."

"The gendarme who acts as driver must be well acquainted with the country," said St. Victor.

"So am I," muttered Malabry, "and I am just as pleased they should take that side."

"Why?"

"Because General Cadoudal slept last night at Croixdalle, which is on the Neufchâtel road. The major must be furnished with his description, and if he met him, who knows but he might recognise him under his disguise! All these gendarme fellows have lynx eyes."

"Well, it would be too bad if George were to meet with him on the road! But we shall have time enough to talk as we go along. Come and seat yourself by my side, Tamerlane, and you, Malabry, take the reins."

Malabry had already mounted the box and was gathering up the reins with expert fingers; in former times, he had acted as coachman to a mem-

ber of the Breton parliament. A single stride sufficed to bring Tamerlane's long legs behind those of his stalwart comrade.

"Good-bye, Sans-Peur," cried St. Victor, seating himself beside the most learned of the Chouans. "If you have any interesting news to give, you know you can write to 'Citizen Charles Valréas, 32 Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève, Paris.'"

"I know. A prosperous journey to you!" was the innkeeper's laconic answer.

Malabry whipped up his horses, and they trotted briskly up the hill on the summit of which rise the imposing ruins of the Château d'Arques. The carriage of which they were in pursuit was soon to be seen rolling along a level road at the bottom of a valley.

"Touch up your horses, Malabry," said St. Victor, "we are too far off, and unless we gain on them, we may miss the scent where the cross-roads meet."

The order was promptly obeyed, and by the time the carriage containing Louise Maneheu entered the village of St. Aubin, the car had nearly overtaken it, and never again lost sight of its predecessor. As Sans-Peur had foreseen, it turned to the right after leaving the hamlet.

"Ah, now I feel sure they are going to sleep at Forges," said Malabry.

"Do you know the place?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes, as tiny a hole as the towns about Rennes."

"Is a brigade of gendarmes stationed there?"

"Not yet. Sans-Peur told me there was to be before the end of the year."

"Before the end of the year the gendarmes will be our friends, for the king will be on the throne. The important point is, that Major Robert will have to sleep at the inn."

"There is but one, the *Croix-Blanche*."

"A name of good omen. We will put up there too."

"Then do you mean to show yourself to this experienced soldier?" asked Tamerlane.

"I mean to show both myself and you. He cannot recognise us, for he only saw us by night, and in such different apparel."

"Possibly not. But may I ask what is your plan for rescuing his prisoner?"

"My plan? Do I look like a concoctor of plans? I have taken it into my head to rescue the wife of our comrade Maneheu, and mean to carry it through somehow, but the way must depend on circumstances."

"But we must arrange with you what story we are to tell this officer about ourselves. Unless we give him some explanation of our journey, he cannot fail to be surprised at meeting us every night."

"True. I have no interest in concealing the assumed name under which I pass in Paris, so I shall continue to be Valréas, a gentleman of independent means. You can be my cousin, if you like, one of the junior branch of the Valréas, and Malabry can pass for our servant. We are returning by easy stages from Dieppe, where we have been amusing ourselves by bathing in the sea. No one will suspect two idle young fellows dressed in the latest fashion. No doubt the major will be delighted to find some one to talk to, and be ready enough to enter into conversation with us."

"I doubt that. Men of his kidney do not talk, they stab."

"Pooh! Liardot, who has had a good deal of intercourse with him, calls him an intelligent fellow! I have no doubt you will make a conquest of

him, while Malabry, who is no fool, can win the confidence of his subalterns by offering them a glass of brandy. Then, when we have lulled their suspicions, it will be easy to find our opportunity."

"But supposing we succeed in rescuing this Helen from her ravishers, what are we to do with her?"

"Is that your difficulty? We shall probably rescue her by night, and before daybreak we shall have found her some place of refuge with a friend. We are sure of always finding one in the neighbourhood, because our halting-places are arranged for on this road. We can leave her there till some one can take her on to join her husband in Paris."

"And shall we continue to travel on with the gendarmes?"

"Certainly. We will even assist them to search for their escaped prisoner, a step by which we may hope to win Citizen Robert's good graces. In these days, the friendship of a major in the gendarmes is worth cultivating."

"Very well arranged! I have no objections to your plan, for whatever you may say, it is a plan concocted on the spur of the moment, as Minerva sprang armed from the brain of Jove."

St. Victor held his peace, lest Tamerlane should be encouraged to persevere in this mythological strain. They continued to drive at the rate of nine miles an hour without stopping, so that, long before nightfall, they found themselves within sight of the belfry of Forges, rising above the woods surrounding the village which, in our days, thanks to its mineral waters, has grown into a pretty little town.

As soon as the car entered the square where swung the signboard of the *Croix-Blanche*, St. Victor was rejoiced by seeing the carriage standing without the horses in front of the inn. "Now, my men," said he to his companions, "you know your parts, see that you play them well. If your memory should fail you, I am here to prompt you."

Malabry drew up three paces behind the carriage which had brought the prisoner, and shouted for the ostler, while St. Victor and Tamerlane sprang down. As they were about to enter the inn, they found themselves face to face with the Major, who had been attracted to the threshold by the noise.

The play was beginning, as St. Victor had suggested, and presence of mind was essential. The officer was casting scrutinizing glances at these two young men advancing towards him, and seemed in no hurry to make way for them to pass. He stood on the threshold, frowning and humming a tune, without showing the slightest intention of moving. St. Victor however was not to be taken aback; he bowed courteously, and said in the most insinuating tone: "Excuse my disturbing you, sir. The mason who built this house was an idiot, and made the doorway so narrow that I shall really be unable to enter unless you will be so good as to stand a little on one side."

"Are you intending to sleep here?" asked the Major, still rigid in manner and attitude.

"I will not conceal that such is my intention, sir," replied St. Victor. "I have an excellent reason for wishing to do so, since I am told this is the only inn in the village. You may believe that I would far rather be in my own comfortable bed in Paris."

"Are you on your way to Paris?"

"Yes, but travelling by short stages. I can't endure fatigue, that is why I have a horror of public conveyances. And my cousin shares my feelings," added St. Victor, pointing to Tamerlane,

"Well," resumed the officer, "I advise you not to have your horses taken out, but to drive on to the next town."

"May I ask the reason for your advice?"

"Because there is no room for you at the *Croix-Blanche*, and no other inn at Forges, as you yourself have just stated."

"No room, how dreadful! But I and my cousin should occupy such a little corner."

"All the rooms are engaged, I repeat."

"And by whom?"

"By myself and the persons travelling with me."

"Oh, that makes a difference, sir, we should be very sorry to put you to any inconvenience. The landlord must shake down some clean straw in a corner, and we shall do very well."

The Major's brow again darkened; it was evident that he disliked the traveller's persistency. "I might as well warn you also," said he, in a dry tone, "that you will find no supper. We have bespoken all the provisions."

"Oh, we are so abstemious that bread and butter will suffice us, if necessary. We had such an excellent dinner at Dieppe that we might really do without supper at all."

"Then you come from Dieppe, do you?" asked the officer, eyeing St. Victor closely.

"Yes. We have been spending a month's holiday there, and are really quite sorry to leave the sea. The bathing is such a pleasure, especially to us Parisians. You have probably come from there too?"

"No."

"Oh, then, you have not heard the news, the important news?"

"No."

"Then I may have the pleasure of informing you. A great battle was fought last night in the neighbourhood of the town."

"A great battle?"

"Yes, between the Chonans, who were attempting to land, and the troops, who drove them back. Fortunately, the rebels were defeated; they were obliged to retreat, and the brave soldiers of the First Consul killed many of them. It seems that the famous George Cadoudal was commanding in person, and just as we were starting, the report ran that he had been taken prisoner."

"Really?" said the captain, somewhat mollified.

"As I have the honour of telling you, not that I really believe it, though I would give a thousand crowns to know that government was rid of this dangerous rebel."

"Then you are a partisan of the government?"

"Ah, I may well be! Why, my late father, who had made a handsome fortune in the grocery business, was half ruined in 1793 by the *maximum*; he regained part of it after the 9th Thermidor, but was completely cleared out by the depreciation of *assignats* under the Directory. He would never have been able to leave me a *sou* if General Bonaparte had not managed to oust Barras and his crew. After the 18th Brumaire, matters began to look up a little, and last year I came into a nice little property, which allows me to realize my wishes and live without doing anything. I can never forget that I owe my good fortune to the First Consul."

"'A god has given us this leisure,' as Virgil said, speaking of Augustus," murmured Tamerlane, who had been watching for an opportunity of introducing a quotation.

"Pray excuse my cousin," exclaimed St. Victor, "he is always eager to display his learning, but he shares my political opinions."

"I ought to feel grateful to the gentleman for having translated the Latin into French for us," said the officer with a smile, gradually softening. The political creed he had just heard recited had done much to moderate his hostile feelings, and he began already to dislike the travellers less.

"Will you oblige me by mentioning your name?" added he.

"You remind me, sir, that I have been remiss in not introducing myself sooner. My name is Valréas, better known, I must confess, at the Tivoli fêtes and Ranelagh gardens, than in the commercial world. And this is my learned cousin Antoine Valréas, who prided himself on being a *savant*, though his father and mine were partners."

"And is the robust fellow holding your horses a relation likewise?"

"No, indeed! Only our former shop-boy whom I have turned into my coachman."

Captain Robert's face relaxed. He fancied he had before him one of the young dandies of the period, an insignificant sort of fellow, and being himself of a sociable turn at bottom, thought he might find the company of these cousins pleasant enough during the journey. He had made up his mind half reluctantly to travel by short stages; public conveyances were, however, very slow in those days, and the highroads molested by highwaymen. Moreover, he had received precise instructions, when he quitted Paris, to bring back any prisoners he might capture by roundabout ways, and as secretly as possible. The diligence that passed through Rouen would have been three days on the road; Robert would not take more than four by his circuitous route. Still, he had the prospect of three solitary evenings before him, for his men were no companions, and his captive persisted in her silence, in spite of all his attentions. Hence he was ready enough to change his tone, as soon as he fancied himself in possession of full information respecting his fellow-travellers.

"Gentlemen," said he, stepping forward, "I have not given you a cordial reception, but I feel sure you will excuse me, owing to the suspicious nature of the times. If I told you there was neither bed nor supper to be had here, it was because I was in no haste to welcome strangers. Now that I know your name and condition, the case is different. I believe the inn-keeper has still one tolerable room at his disposal, and as to supper, if you will give me the pleasure of your company—"

"Oh, how can we thank you sufficiently!" exclaimed St. Victor. "To have the company of a brave man, instead of the dull evening to which we were looking forward, is luck indeed, and I wish— Oh! what a fine dog," said the pseudo-Valréas, suddenly cutting short his ceremonious speech to caress Jacobin, who had come out from the inn and run straight up to him. "Is it yours, sir?"

Jacobin might almost have understood the question and been endeavouring to answer it, as he bounded joyously around St. Victor, whom he probably recognized as having seen at Bois-Guillaume. But he soon ceased his gambols, and turned to look at Major Robert, showing his teeth and uttering low growls.

"No, he is not mine, and not fond of me either, as you may see," returned the officer. "He is so ready to fly at strangers, that his manner towards you almost makes me fancy he must have met you before."

"Oh, all dogs take a fancy to me," returned St. Victor, who thought a grain of suspicion lurked in this remark of the officer's. "You see how he

fawns on me, while he pays no attention whatever to my cousin. If I only knew who his owner was, I would offer to buy him."

"The offer would not be accepted. The dog belongs to a lady, a relative of mine."

"And you are taking care of it for her?"

"No, she is travelling with me."

"Then we shall no doubt have the honour of supping with her. But only think of our embarrassment! We have sent our luggage on to Paris, and have nothing with us but a valise. To think of appearing before a lady in our travelling-suits! It is too dreadful!" cried St. Victor, affecting the manners of a dandy of the period.

The Major, who had continued to watch him, was so completely deluded that he had ventured to speak of his prisoner to the cousins. He felt it would be impossible to conceal her presence throughout the journey, and it would be necessary to account for the close surveillance under which she was kept. A plausible explanation suddenly occurred to him.

"Do not distress yourself, sir," said he in a subdued manner, "the lady I am taking to Paris will sup in her own room."

"I am scarcely consoled by hearing that; I believe I should prefer even the humiliation of appearing in my travel-stained suit rather than be deprived of the society of this charming lady, for charming she is, I have no doubt."

"My unfortunate relative is very handsome, certainly, but she has lost her reason, and is, I fear, incurable, though my object in taking her now to Paris is to place her under the care of a celebrated doctor."

"How terrible!" said St. Victor with great unction.

"Another victim of cruel fate, *Ἀνάγκη* as the Greeks called it," sighed Tamerlane.

"And what was the origin of this fearful calamity?" asked St. Victor.

"A sudden fright," replied the Major with perfect composure. "I and my brother, and sister-in-law, were living in a country house in the neighbourhood of Neuchâtel. Last winter we were attacked during the night by one of those roving bands which the First Consul has had so much trouble to put down. We defended ourselves vigorously, and the assailants retired after a fruitless attempt to set fire to the house, but my poor brother was killed by a bullet striking his forehead, and his wife became deranged."

"What a distressing story," said St. Victor, who was secretly surmising what the officer's reasons might be for inventing it. "And it is this unfortunate sister-in-law whom you are now taking to Paris?"

"Yes. Her madness is of a very singular description. She is only insane on one point; she imagines herself to be the wife of one of those Chouans who attacked us, and maintains that she herself is a prisoner, and I her gaoler."

St. Victor only replied by a gesture of compassion, and again caressed Jacobin, saying: "I sympathise with your sorrow, sir; do not fear that I shall annoy you by insisting on seeing this interesting victim of our civil discords. Would that these rascally Chouans were all demolished!"

"They will be, you need not doubt, for the First Consul is determined to make an end of them. But as we are to sup together, excuse me while I give my orders to the landlady. I daresay you will be glad to look after the stabling of your horses."

"I shall, indeed, for my coachman has taken them out, and does not

know where to put them. The people at this inn do not seem eager to welcome their guests ; we have not seen the face of a single servant."

"I will send some one to you," said Robert, turning back into the house, with a courteous bow to his new acquaintances.

Jacobiu gave a joyful bark and came to rub himself against St. Victor, as much as to say : "I shall stay with you, because I like you, and hate the man who torments my mistress."

"Well, we are getting on splendidly," said Tamerlane in a low voice.

"Yes, the beast is half-tamed, but we have our work before us yet. This story of his prisoner's madness, which he has invented to account for the close eye kept on her movements, proves that he is on his guard, and we shall not find it easy to approach Louise. If we could only let her know that we are here, it would be something, but we cannot even tell which is her room."

"Besides, she is sure to be closely guarded by the two fellows he has picked out from his gendarmes."

"Let us go and tell all to Malabry. If he cannot help us with advice, his strong arm will do us a good turn when the time comes."

"Our story has answered," said St. Victor, when they reached the brave Hercules. "The officer believes in us as the citizens Valréas, and you are my servant. We are to sup with him ; you will have to sit down with the gendarme who passes for their coachman. Make him drink, and try to get something out of him."

"All right. Send me two or three bottles of brandy, and if he keeps pace with me, he will be rolling under the table by-and-by."

"Don't let him get tipsy before you have learnt where Maneheu's wife is lodged."

As the three friends were talking, they went round the house to enter the yard, followed by the dog. As they were turning the gable end, Jacobin suddenly reared up on his hind legs, and barked as if he were addressing some one. St. Victor raised his head, and caught sight of Louise standing at a window on the first floor.

"Why, there she is !" cried St. Victor, grasping his comrade by the arm. "And the window is only ten feet from the ground," added Malabry.

Louise Maneheu recognised the pedlar whom she had seen at Bois-Guil-laume the night before, and who had made a sign of intelligence to her that very morning outside the castle gate at Dieppe. She waved her hand, and St. Victor was about to convey to her by an expressive pantomime that he should make an attempt to rescue her that very night, but, before he had raised a finger, the young woman suddenly turned away from the window. Some one had evidently entered the room, and she was advancing to meet him, in order not to be caught telegraphing to her defender.

"Let us move on," said St. Victor ; "the officer must not catch sight of us under this window, and I would bet anything it is he who has just come to visit his prisoner."

In another second they were round the corner and entered the yard, where they found the stable. Malabry fastened up his horses side by side with the Major's, and as there was no one there, the three friends were able to hold a brief consultation. Jacobin was not with them ; on seeing his dear mistress suddenly vanish, he had darted towards the inn-door, hastening no doubt to her assistance.

"Did you see the window ?" asked St. Victor of Malabry.

"Yes, and I will undertake to climb up, if Tamerlane will let me stand on his shoulders."

"Tamerlane must join me at supper in order to assist in engaging the officer's attention. Try to manage it alone."

"Very well. I will take down two or three hay-racks and convert them into a ladder."

"I saw shutters," said Tamerlane, "the Major will probably have them closed and barred inside for the night."

"I shall contrive to open them."

"And supposing the noise brings the gendarmes to the spot?"

"I shall just knock them down."

"Well, but that would compel us to make short work of the officer, and he will not allow himself to be so easily disposed of. The people of the inn would scaram, and we should have the whole place about us. Your plan will never work."

"Then suggest something better."

"It seems to me," said Tamerlane, "that we should do best to risk nothing, but be guided by circumstances. We have at least two nights before us, and what we cannot manage here may be practicable at one of the other places."

"You are right," said St. Victor. "Still, I should like to do it as soon as possible. So, to-night, Malabry, when the coachman who sups with you is under the table or elsewhere, you can leave the room softly under the pretext of going to see whether your horses are fed, and as you pass that window, throw a little stone against the shutters. If there is no padlock on them, Louise will be sure to open, for she will understand that the pebble has been thrown to let her know we are there."

"I can manage that and help her down myself. But supposing she does not throw back the shutters?"

"Then come back at once, and show yourself for an instant in the room where we shall be chatting with the officer. I shall understand what it means, and we will defer our attempt till the following night."

"Agreed. But we must make the attempt early in the evening."

"Why?"

"Because if I succeed in removing the woman, I want to have time to take her to a friend of mine who lives in the forest about three miles from here, and to be back by daybreak so that the *blues* cannot suspect us of having had anything to do with their prisoner."

"Hush!" whispered Tamerlane. "Here comes the officer. I hear his step in the yard."

Robert appeared that instant at the door, and his countenance betokened a kindly feeling towards his new acquaintance. "Ah, you have come to see for yourselves that your horses have all they want; you are not quite such thorough Parisians as you look," said he blithely. "But now I want you to come in to supper, I don't know whether you feel as hungry as I do, but it is ready. When I arrived I ordered supper for three, intending to let two of the farm-servants whom I am taking with me to watch my unhappy sister-in-law, sit down with me, so it fits in beautifully, for you may be sure I prefer your company to theirs."

"We are really immensely obliged to you, but why dismiss these worthy fellows? I assure you we are not proud and should never forgive ourselves if we were to disturb—"

"No, it will be better as it is. This is one of the poor woman's bad

days. She has just been seized with a fit of violence, and must be closely watched."

"What? Can her life be in danger?"

"No, it is merely a monomania for flight which occasionally possesses her. She fancies the Chouans are pursuing her and tries to escape, so I have had to station my two servants in a room adjoining hers. They will see that she takes her food, and then lock her up for the night. I have even advised them to close the shutters, lest she should try to jump through the window."

"Dear me! What precautions you are obliged to take! How I grieve for the state of the unfortunate lady!"

"We have all some trouble to bear. But now to supper, gentlemen, for the soup will be getting cold. By the way, I have arranged for my coachman to take his meals in the kitchen, and yours might join him, if you like."

"Thank you, he will be delighted. Do you hear, Barnaby?"

"Yes, Mr. Charles," returned Malabry, assuming his new character.

"So my name is Barnaby, it seems," added he to himself.

The travellers crossed the yard and soon found themselves seated before a table covered with a fine damask cloth that had gone rather yellow; it was not decorated with plate or glass, but an enormous soup-tureen, flanked by a stewed fowl and roast duck, gave it an inviting air. Its attractions were completed by a bottle placed before each guest, covered with dust that spoke of its having lain long in the cellar.

As all three were very hungry, their spirits rose during the meal, and they outvied each other in gaiety. The officer could be agreeable and sociable enough when he chose to forget his professional duties; St. Victor's life and fun were as inexhaustible as his appetite, and even Tamerlane's learned pleasantry served to enliven the conversation. By the time they had reached dessert, which consisted of the national products, apples and Neuf-châtel cheese, the trio had become excellent friends.

When the hostess brought in the coffee and brandy which accompany every meal in this part of France, Major Robert was promising himself the pleasure of the cousins' society for the rest of his journey, while St. Victor was musing how he could best detain him at table. While they were supping, the landlady had informed him that she was having the room next to the officer's prepared for himself and his cousin, but he wished to give Malabry as much time as possible to attempt the rescue.

Malabry too, was at table, seated opposite to Barbot, the corporal, who was acting as coachman, and St. Victor, who, through the open door, could command the kitchen opposite, was pleased to see the latter emptying his glass as often as the Chouan filled it.

"Do you play chess?" said the officer, presently.

At this unexpected question, St. Victor started, and blamed himself for never having added this accomplishment to his list. How serviceable it would have been to him now! Yet he was forced to confess his ignorance of the noble game.

"What a pity!" said the officer. "It would have occupied our evening. I am so fond of the game, that I could play four-and-twenty hours running."

"I never lamented my ignorance more; but you might perhaps like a game at piquet?" suggested St. Victor.

"No, thank you. I hate cards. But never mind, we must be up early, if we mean to escape the great heat, so we may as well retire betimes. Besides, I must make my rounds during the night."

"Your rounds?"

"Yes, I am never easy about my poor sister-in-law. An accident might so easily occur, and I shall keep an especial eye on the window."

"Allow me to mention," said Tamerlane, "that I play chess, though my cousin Charles does not."

"What, really?"

"Yes, and I even pride myself somewhat on my skill, for I have had a good deal of practice, having always been fond of quiet amusements. The only difficulty is where to find a chess-board. The hostess, I fear, will scarcely furnish us with men for 'the game of Palamedes.'"

This time, St. Victor forgave Tamerlane his quotation, in his delight at finding he could play chess.

"If that is the only difficulty," returned the officer gaily, "it is soon solved, for I always carry my chess-men about with me. If you will wait a minute, I will bring them down."

He rose and ran upstairs. The landlady had retired to clean her sauce-pans, and so the two Chouans were left by themselves.

"What do you say now?" asked Tamerlane, with a serio-comic air.

"Thanks to you, we have him now. But Malabry must be cautioned. Come here a minute, Barnaby," cried he through the open door.

The Hercules rose and was by his side instantly.

"How have you got on?" said St. Victor in a low tone.

"Oh, the fellow carries his liquor well, but he does not know what he is saying. He has been talking nonsense for the last half-hour, and before this bottle is finished, he will be snoring soundly."

"Well, we have found the means of detaining the officer here, and as soon as you see him absorbed in his game, you may risk the attempt. He is going to play chess with Tamerlane, and he is so devoted to the game that a cannon-shot would scarcely divert his attention."

"I don't understand the game. You had better make me a sign when to go."

"Oh, but remember what sharp eyes the gendarme has—he might happen to see me—"

"Listen to me, Malabry," broke in Tamerlane, "have you quick ears?"

"I can almost hear the grass grow, if I were to listen."

"Then if I raise my voice a little when I say *Check to the queen!* you could hear me into the kitchen. Remember the phrase."

"*Check to the queen!* Yes. As soon as you use those words, I will go out quietly. There is a little door close by which leads into the yard."

"Agreed!" said St. Victor. "Be back in your place now. The gendarme is coming downstairs."

"I am bringing the soldiers and our battlefield," said the officer, unfolding a paper board and emptying out some box-wood pieces.

"I shall do my best to defend myself," said the supposed cousin Antoine, modestly, "though I fear you will rout me as completely as you did the Chouans who attacked your country-house."

"I will not deny that I am a fair player," replied the Major, pluming himself slightly.

"I can scarcely say as much for myself, and if I lose the first game, shall not blush to ask you to give me a piece next time."

"Oh, certainly! Two, if you like."

"Since you allow me the first move, I will take advantage of it, for I feel sure your success will not depend on that."

"We shall see," murmured the officer, who was already absorbed in planning his attack.

There was a lull in the conversation, as is demanded by the most silent of games. Even St. Victor held his tongue and professed to be following the moves, as if anxious to learn the game. Still, though his eyes remained fixed on the board, his ears were attentive to the sounds proceeding from the kitchen; these were gradually subsiding, for Corporal Barbot had got beyond singing, and could only utter fragmentary sentences about Pyramids and crocodiles, having begun by informing Malabry that, before turning coachman, he had served in Egypt as a private in Dessaix's division.

Meanwhile, Tamerlane was playing with a studied deliberation and prudence which somewhat baffled his antagonist's brilliant attack; he contented himself with remaining on the defensive, though he marshalled his pieces so as to be ready to take advantage of any oversight on the other side. This style of play irritated the officer, who exclaimed sarcastically:

"If that is your usual play, the game will last for-ever. You so rarely attack me that you have not once given me the opportunity of checking your queen."

"I am really ashamed, dear sir," replied Tamerlane, "to delay your triumph so long, but you must make allowance for a novice like myself. Besides, in this game, I really think one gains more by being cautious than eager. It resembles the art of war, and if the Romans had been acquainted with chess, Fabius Cunctator would probably have approved of my strategy."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Major. "I do not presume to dictate what your play should be. Every man has his own method, and we shall see presently which is best."

Silence succeeded, for Robert felt the dangers that might lie concealed beneath his opponent's timid game, and was endeavouring to end it by a bold stroke; but as the game advanced, he became more conscious that Antoine, in spite of his assumed simplicity, was always on his guard. Several opportunities for checking the queen had arrived, but Tamerlane had always passed them over, though, in the general entanglement of pawns, bishops, and knights, it seemed doubtful whether the principal pieces could be kept much longer out of the fray.

The thick voice of the Egyptian was sometimes audible in strange talk, of which the trio in the sitting-room caught but fragments.

"Yes, my good fellow," cried he, "as sure as you see me, forty centuries have gazed upon me."

"Forty *what*?" muttered Malabry.

"Forty centuries, I say. They seem to have been on the top of the monuments beneath which I had the honour of forming part of a square with Dessaix's division."

"And what did they look like?"

"I did not see them, but General Bonaparte, who is now First Consul, mentioned it in his orders for the day. That was enough for me, and should be for you, youngster."

St. Victor, who did not lose a word of this dialogue, would have laughed heartily under any other circumstances, but was now beginning to feel uneasy; the corporal had too good a head for liquor to overpower him, and Tamerlane, in spite of his skill, would not be able to remain always on the defensive.

"If Bonaparte had only your caution, he need fear nothing from these

rebels who are conspiring against him," said the officer, vexed to have his opponent parry a long premeditated check.

"I hope he will take care of himself," cried the supposed cousin, Antoine. "What would become of us, if he did not guard against his enemies? Oh, what a fright I had on the 3rd Nivôse, the night of that horrible affair of the infernal machine in the Rue St. Nicaise. Fortunately, the event must have taught him caution. Chess-players are always cautious, and I am told that the First Consul plays—"

"Wretchedly," broke in Robert.

"Have you had the honour of playing with him?" asked Tamerlane, with an eagerness which testified to his admiration for the leading man in the state.

"I? No. Where in the world should I have come across him?" returned the officer, regretting what he had said. "But I heard so from a retired officer living at Nenfchatel, who had played with Bonaparte at the siege of Toulon. He gave him back a rook and won."

"Yours is in danger, my dear sir," observed Tamerlane, modestly.

"True, by jingo! But you made me talk," exclaimed the Major, angrily. And resting his elbows on the table, he resumed with eagerness the game he now feared he might lose.

Antoine's batteries were being gradually unmasked, and revealed some profound calculations. His queen, well protected in front, was now beginning to make an attack, and Robert became deeply absorbed in defending himself.

"You are doubly checked by the rook and by the king," murmured Tamerlane.

"So I see," said the officer, curtly.

"And by the knight as well; it is terrible, you will lose your rook."

"That remains to be seen," said Robert, angrily.

"He is furious, and will never rise till he has won his game," thought St. Victor. "Tamerlane has reason to congratulate himself on his happy thought."

At that moment Malabry began to cough noisily, so, leaving the Major to consider how he might save his rook, Tamerlane raised his head and looked across into the kitchen. The unfortunate Barbot was vainly trying to resist the effects of the brandy, and his head had sunk again and again on the table. Malabry cast a significant glance, as much as to say, "No fear now. I am only waiting for orders." Tamerlane glanced furtively at the clock opposite, and saw it was just nine o'clock.

"I abandon my rook," said Robert, suddenly. "Take it if you choose."

"Oh, dear sir," exclaimed Tamerlane, "I am sure a player of your skill must be laying some trap for me. 'I fear the Greeks, even when they offer us gifts,' said an illustrious Latin poet."

"This has nothing to do with the Greeks. Are you going to take it or not?"

Tamerlane hesitated a second, but a loud snore from the kitchen warned him that the time had come. Barbot was sound asleep.

"Perhaps, my dear sir," replied he, "I may be wrong in disdaining such a windfall, yet I shall refrain from taking your rook, for I see a still better move. *Check to the queen!*"

This move was so unexpected, and might change the game so completely, that the officer started, and as soon as he had recovered his surprise, re-

sumed the game with fresh ardour. At that moment the inn might have been set on fire like the farm of Bois-Guillaume without arousing the Major. He never noticed that Barbot was dead drunk, and the energetic snores of his corporal did not succeed in diverting his attention from the chess-board, where his queen, attacked by a bishop, and unluckily posted in front of the king, was in great jeopardy.

He did not observe Malabry's disappearance, nor did Tamerlane, but St. Victor, being merely a spectator of the conquest, was able to keep an eye on the kitchen, and was alert to every sound. The minutes immediately succeeding the *check to the queen* were very quiet, and Tamerlane was able to enjoy the self-satisfaction of an expert chess-player, while the officer pressed his hands to his brow, and vainly sought to parry the attack of his wily adversary.

"I have lost my queen evidently," said he between his teeth, "and by my own fault. I ought to have foreseen that move of yours, but I shall never manage to concentrate my attention properly." And wishing to excuse the oversight, and at the same time vent his vexation on some one, he added: "This comes of allowing that stupid coachman of mine to sup so near us; I could not help listening to the absurd rubbish he was talking."

"Would you like me to close the kitchen door?" asked St. Victor promptly.

"No, it is useless now. He has gone to sleep, and, as soon as our game is over, I shall give him a few thumps to awake him. But what has become of your servant?"

"He must have retired to the stable for the night; he is the greatest sleeper I know, and never likes to leave his horses either day or night."

The officer's thoughts meanwhile were absorbed in his game, and he paid little heed to this answer.

"I must let you take the piece, I see," said he with a malicious smile, thinking he had just discovered a move which might help him to defeat his antagonist yet.

"I will take it," said Tamerlane. "It may be a trap, if so, I am caught. If you win without a queen, it will prove that you are decidedly the superior player."

Now that Malabry was gone, and the signal no longer needed, all he cared about was to detain the officer in front of the chess-board. In order to do this, Tamerlane refrained from putting forth his full strength, and made two or three blunders to keep the game more even. The Major's spirits rose, and he began to whistle softly. He had just planned a series of moves which would entail checkmate.

"Ah, I ought to have been on my guard," sighed Tamerlane. "I had the game in my hands, and now seem like to lose it, all through indulging myself in the pleasure of getting rid of that queen."

"It is dangerous sometimes to meddle with the ladies," jeered the officer. "Check to the king, sir! Let us see how you will parry that."

"Really, I don't know, I begin to fear that to night Paris will be beaten by the provinces. But I must try. Let me see, I will cover my king with the knight, who, in his turn, checks yours."

"Then I shall exchange my bishop for your knight. I don't care much for bishops, but knights frighten me. Now, check to the king! This time, I hope—"

His sentence remained unfinished, while he strained his ears to account for some distant sounds.

"I have covered the check," returned Tamerlane.

"That sounds like the barking of a dog," murmured Robert, still listening.

"No, it is only your coachman snoring a little louder," said St. Victor promptly.

"I don't know why I don't go and shake the brute," growled the captain.

"Barbot, Barbot! Rouse up, you toper!"

The corporal opened his eyes for a second, raised his head, and with great difficulty articulated the following instructive words: "You see, my good fellow, in that country they stuff all those who carry their arms on the left, whether they be men, women, or beasts." So saying, his head sank down again upon the table, with a feeling that he had given his companion Barnaby a most lucid summary of the manners and customs of ancient Egypt.

"It is your turn to play, my dear sir; you have the game in your own hands now," remarked Tamerlane, who was anxious to detain the Major by any expedient. The latter was about to resume the game, when, unluckily, a loud barking was heard, followed by some inexplicable noise. "What is that?" exclaimed the officer, starting to his feet.

"Probably the wind blowing a shutter about," stammered St. Victor.

"Nothing of the sort! I must see what is going on upstairs. Leave the pieces as they are, and come with me." Tamerlane made another effort to detain his antagonist, but the voice of one of the gendarmes posted to guard Louise was heard shouting: "To arms! Help!"

"Ah," cried the Major, "they are trying to carry off my prisoner—I mean, my sister-in-law is attempting to escape. I must go and help my servants to secure her. I shall ask you to accompany me, gentlemen."

This invitation partook of the nature of a command, and was accompanied by such a flash of the eye that neither of the Chonans could think of refusing, unless he meant to quarrel openly with the Major. St. Victor too was anxious to find out what had really happened, so, while warning Tamerlane by a touch of the elbow to have his knife ready in case of need, he replied calmly:

"We are at your disposal," and followed the officer.

"I will not call myself the winner, but I had a good chance of the game," murmured Tamerlane as he ascended the stairs.

On the landing, the Major, who led the way, found himself in the arms of one of his gendarmes, who, confused by his alarm, was about to strangle his commanding officer. While Robert was protesting and trying to liberate himself, St. Victor pushed forward and caught sight of an unexpected scene.

The door of the ante-room in which the two soldiers had been stationed and that of the chamber occupied by Louise were both flung open. In the background stood Louise in a haughty attitude, grasping a torch in one hand and holding back Jacobin with the other, defying the gendarme who had rushed in while his fellow shouted for help, to lay his finger on her, while the man, spell-bound by her disdainful glance, contented himself with shaking his fist at her.

"What is the matter?" cried the officer, who had just succeeded in extricating himself from the embrace of his subaltern.

"She has been trying to escape, Ma—" The soldier's words were cut short by Robert, who laid his hand on his mouth.

"Use more respectful language when you allude to my sister-in-law," said he, emphasizing the word.

"I beg your pardon, sir," murmured the guard, suddenly recollecting himself. St. Victor and Tamerlane exchanged glances.

"What has been the matter, my dear?" said Robert, advancing towards the prisoner, who started at this unwonted familiarity on the part of her jailer. "Sir," said she coldly, "I am in your power and you can treat me as you like, but what right have you to insult me?"

"Insult you! I assure you I have no such intention."

"Is it not an insult to address me as if I were your wife or sister?"

"Her mind is wandering," whispered the Major in the ear of the supposed Valréas, who was saying to himself, as he eyed the farmer's wife: "This rustie beauty is certainly a magnificent creature, and only wants a little fashionable dress to enable her to eclipse any of our grand Parisian ladies."

"Madame," resumed the officer courteously, with evident anxiety to prevent any outburst of feeling, "be so good as to explain."

"What should I have to explain?" asked Louise, contemptuously.

"You are better acquainted with the cause of this noise than I am."

"I assure you I know nothing about it. I heard your dog bark, and then a great noise and cries for help. Pray oblige me by letting me know the reason."

"Ask the soldiers whom you have placed about me as spies."

"Poor woman! she actually takes the farm-labourers for soldiers," remarked Robert, aside. "Can they have been impertinent?" added he, aloud.

"No," replied Louise, ironically. "They only attempted to assassinate me."

"Why, you must be out of your senses," said the officer, forgetting that he had previously proclaimed her mental affliction.

"Are you going to renew your insults? I would sooner die than submit to them. If you wish to know what happened, I will tell you. I had thrown myself on this bed to take a little rest, when I was aroused by a noise outside. Some one was knocking at the shutters, which you had secured from inside by a padlock. I rose and opened the window to listen before replying; then I saw fingers passed through these round holes in the shutters, trying to force them open."

"Are you certain that this was not an illusion caused by your alarm?"

"You must know that I am never afraid. Besides, you may look and see that the shutters have been wrenched from their hinges."

"So they have," said the officer, darting forward and leaning out. "Some one must have climbed up by means of a ladder, and removed it as soon as the alarm was given. Here is something we must examine into," added he to himself.

"Then my dog began to bark, and darted at the head of a man of whom I just caught a glimpse—some one, no doubt, whom you had ordered to come and strangle me in my sleep."

"Wretched woman!" cried Robert, with a menacing gesture.

"Do not forget that she is mad," murmured St. Victor, seizing him by the arm.

"Fortunately," continued Louise, undauntedly, "the man took alarm at my brave Jacobin and leaped down into the yard. At the same moment, my door was opened by one of the jailers whom you set to watch me,

and who, probably, came to ascertain whether the other had done his work."

"This is too much!" thundered the Major. "You know very well that your pretended assassin could only have been some accomplice of your own who was trying to assist you to escape! You did not recognise him all at once, and your dog took him for an enemy. Well, I see now how matters stand, but if you do not wish to force me to proceed to extremities, do not accuse me—"

He stopped short, fearing that he might already have gone too far. And indeed, Louise Manehen had suddenly grasped the real meaning of the attempt frustrated by Jacobin.

St. Victor, who had kept his eyes fixed on her face, read a look of pained surprise there, as the real situation burst upon her, and he was rewarded by a grateful glance. The officer's suspicions, however, increased as hers subsided, and he eyed the two friends with anything but a benevolent scrutiny. They bore it admirably, St. Victor caressing the dog who was sniffing him in a friendly manner, while Tamerlane twirled his thumbs and amused himself by reciting some lines bearing on a game at chess.

"Please follow me, gentlemen," said Robert, curtly; "our presence here annoys the lady, and I am about to make some investigations in which I shall require your assistance. Here," said he to the gendarme, "come and help me to secure the shutters if possible."

The other gendarme was still mounting guard in the ante-room. The Major and his assistant only turned away for half a minute, but, during that time, Louise managed to draw a folded paper from her bosom and place it in Jacobin's mouth, while she pointed to St. Victor. The dog bounded forward, and St. Victor, caressing the animal, took his head between his hands. By the time the officer had turned round, after vainly attempting to close the shutters, whose fastenings Malabry had broken, the prisoner's message had already vanished into the Chouan's pocket.

"Come, gentlemen, I shall need your assistance," repeated the major. "Madame," added he, addressing Louise, who had resumed her impassive attitude, "I shall henceforth be forced to keep you in sight to provide against any recurrence of this incident. You must not object to one of these men keeping guard over your window during the night; to-morrow, I hope we shall be better able to secure you against any of these alarming surprises."

The courageous woman made no reply, but seated herself as far as possible from the gendarme in charge, while Jacobin came and couched at her feet. St. Victor bowed respectfully, but thought it prudent not to utter a word, and the two Chouans followed Robert downstairs, hearing the door lock behind them as they went. The other gendarme brought up the rear.

The officer cast a regretful glance at the chess-board, which they passed on their way to the kitchen. Here the invincible corporal was found snoring under the table, and received a hasty kick as his superior officer passed out into the yard through the narrow door by which Malabry had made his escape.

St. Victor, relying on the usual presence of mind displayed by the Hereules, thought him sure to have retired from the scene of his unsuccessful experiment. The first thing to examine was naturally the wall, but here nothing was to be seen, and the ground was too dry to show any footmarks.

"How very singular!" remarked St. Victor, professing to join in the survey.

"Singular indeed!" rejoined the Major, with a stolidity which augured ill.

"It is evident that some one has attempted the lady's window, and yet there are no traces of it outside."

"Perhaps the attempt was made from the inside."

"What do you mean?"

"That I will tell you when I have seen your coachman."

"My coachman?"

"Yes, the fellow who supped with mine and took himself off as soon as he had made him tipsy."

"Oh, if you have the slightest suspicions about Barnaby, I should like you to see him at once. I know the fellow well, and would bet you anything that he has gone to sleep by the side of the horses as usual."

"I do not doubt your word, still I should like to see him."

"Then pray come with me, dear sir," said St. Victor, turning towards the stables, and not feeling perfectly at ease, though he reckoned on Malabry's good sense. The officer was the first to enter the shed where the horses were tied up, and at the noise, a man started up from a corner where he was lying on the straw, and cried: "Who is there?"

"It is I, Barnaby," replied the supposed Valréas.

"You, sir? Is it time to put in the horses?"

"No, you have five hours more at least to snooze. But have you heard nothing since you lay down?"

"No, sir—That is to say, the bay mare kicked and stamped frightfully, for she got her fore-leg over the chain."

"That is not what I mean. Did you hear no noise in the yard?"

"Noise? No. To tell you the truth, I emptied two bottles of brandy with my companion there, the man who has served in Egypt, you know, sir—and so—my head was a little heavy, and—as soon as I lay down—I, went to sleep, you see, sir."

"You hear," said St. Victor in a low tone to the officer.

"Yes. Your coachman sleeps soundly, yet he woke up pretty quickly when you summoned him just now."

"Oh, that is all habit! I go to the stables every morning to call him, and he would recognise my voice even in his sleep."

"Enough, sir. I am inclined to think the attempt must have been made by some ordinary thieves, who knew nothing about my unfortunate sister-in-law, and were frightened away by the dog. Let us return to the inn and go to our rooms. I have no right to be keeping you standing here."

"And what of our game?" asked Tamerlane.

"You may consider yourself the victor," replied the officer.

"By Jove," thought St. Victor to himself, "he must be either preoccupied or very suspicious of us to own himself beaten."

In crossing the yard, Robert caught sight of a ladder, reared against the wall. "The rascals must have made use of this," said he, touching it with the toe of his boot.

"Then there must have been two of them at least," remarked Tamerlane, "for it would be impossible for any single man to remove such a heavy ladder quickly."

The Major was possibly of the same opinion, for he said nothing.

"Good-night, sir," exclaimed St. Victor, "but this is a great disappoint-

ment to me. I had hoped to pass a most agreeable evening in your company, but am forced to recognise that in a house where shutters are smashed in the dark, one's first thought must be self-protection. We must therefore bid you good-evening and retire to our room; it is next yours, I believe, and if you should require any assistance in the course of the night, you have only to rap through the wall. I hope that we may find more peaceful quarters to-morrow night, for I reckon on our travelling together."

"And on playing half-a-dozen more games at least," added Tamerlane.

"It seems probable, certainly," said Robert coldly, "that we shall travel along the same road, since we are both going to Paris. I fear however that I shall be deprived of your society during the evening, for I have a friend at Gisors, my next halting-place, who is a captain in the gendarmerie and offers me quarters in his barracks. There, at least, I shall be secure from any nocturnal surprises."

"The regret will be on our side, I assure you, sir," replied St. Victor, feeling somewhat crestfallen.

The major then sent his servant to show them their room, while he himself remained below. "This looks bad," said Tamerlane, as soon as they were alone, "he suspects us, and we shall not get another chance."

"Never mind," said St. Victor, pulling out the note conveyed to him by Jacobin, "we will not despair till we see what the fair prisoner has to say. Women are sometimes happily inspired. Listen to this.

"I recognised you this morning at Dieppe," ran the note, "and now that I have again caught sight of you in this inn, I feel sure you are following in the hopes of rescuing me. While thanking you most warmly, I must entreat you to desist from your generous project, if it would cause you to compromise the cause which we have at heart. I am to be taken to Paris, and after this shall be locked up every night in a gendarmerie barracks. Any attempt must therefore prove fruitless, and it will be better, for the general interests of all, to leave me to my fate. If you see Pierre, tell him they know nothing, and will learn nothing from my lips, even if I should die for it. Many thanks. Farewell."

St. Victor had read this note rapidly in a low voice, but Tamerlane had caught every word, and exclaimed: "This woman ought to have lived in Rome two thousand years ago. She reminds me of the wife of Pœtus—"

"Nonsense! Leave your Roman history alone and give me some advice. Do you think we had better give up our enterprise or make another attempt to-morrow night?"

"Did you not hear what the Major said about sleeping at the barracks? We cannot fight a whole brigade, and I don't suppose Cadoudal would approve of this roaming about, when we ought to be at our posts."

"Oh, I will undertake to convince him that we are all interested in rescuing Louise Maneheu from the hands of the police. Still, perhaps it will be better not to compromise ourselves. I know this brave creature will be silent as the grave, and if they put her into prison in Paris, our friend Liardot will contrive to get her out again."

"A happy thought! Then we had better be off early, and drive on so as to reach Paris before them."

The sound of the officer's footsteps put an end to this conversation. The two Chouans threw themselves, without undressing, on the beds resigned to them by their formidable neighbour, and feigned sleep, lest he should chance to play the spy through some chink in the slight partition. Everything remained quiet, but St. Victor never closed an eyelid, and at day-

break he was up and off to the stables, where he found Malabry and Barbot both harnessing their horses.

The corporal, who had slept off the effects of his carouse, seemed to bear no grudge to his boon companion, and the officer, who soon arrived on the scene, appeared to have forgotten what had occurred the previous evening. Civilities were exchanged, though somewhat ceremoniously, and when the supposed Valréas announced his intention of being first on the road, Robert made no attempt to detain him.

As soon as they were well in advance and rolling along a quiet stretch of road, St. Victor took the opportunity of questioning Malabry. "Now," said he, slapping him on the shoulder, "tell me how you managed your stupid failure?"

"It was the fault of that wretched dog," muttered Malabry, without turning round. "How could I guess he would begin to bark?"

"If you had but patted him when we arrived yesterday, he would have recognised you and never barked at all."

"You should have told me that. Animals never take to me."

"Indeed! I should never have supposed it," exclaimed St. Victor, who had no great opinion of the intellectual faculties of his brave comrade. "However, I will say nothing, for you must have exerted all your strength to remove those locked and barred shutters, and you were quick enough in replacing that ladder. Now all you have to do is to whip up your horses so that we may reach Paris to-morrow."

"Then do you mean to abandon the woman?"

"Much against my will, I assure you, but we have not the slightest chance of rescuing her at Gisors."

"No, but we might on the road. They knew nothing about the Bouchevilliers ford."

"What is that?"

"A point where the road crosses the Epte, six miles above Gournay. There we might rescue the woman and drown the blues into the bargain, if you will let me take my own way."

"How do you mean to manage that?"

"Leave it to me and I will succeed," declared Malabry.

"Well," said George's lieutenant, "I should be sorry to leave this noble creature in the lurch without making another effort. But cannot you explain your tactics?"

"Not now. When we reach the ford, three words will show you my plan."

"Well, we will try it. Matters are so desperate now that we have nothing to lose."

The Hercules made no reply, but put his horses to a brisk trot. St. Victor was soon lulled to sleep by the monotonous sound of the wheels after the restless night he had passed, while Tamerlane spent his time in repeating to himself the fourth canto of the *Eneid*, of which he was particularly fond. The road lay through a quiet country, where few people were to be seen at this early hour. On arriving at Gournay, Malabry begged his friends not to get down, and ordered his horses food without unharnessing them. St. Victor felt hungry enough, but complied heroically with the driver's wishes, while Tamerlane, who lived principally on poetry, never felt the want of food.

After a rest of twenty minutes, they drove on, and soon found themselves skirting a hill, at the base of which flowed a rather narrow stream.

"That is the Epte," said Malabry, who had kept silence for two hours.

"The ford lies behind those trees you see over there."

"Ah!" said St. Victor, waking up. "Your stream does not look very wide."

"No, but it is deep enough to drown a whole troop of gendarmes."

"That is more than enough. I leave the matter entirely in your hands." Malabry made no reply, but kept his eye fixed on the bottom of the valley, where the course of the water was concealed by a fringe of tall trees: in a few minutes the carriage had turned a corner in the road, and came to a sudden stop. Before it lay the river Epte, which the railway now spans by a single arch. In those days the projected bridge was waiting to be built, and the ford, though occasionally the scene of accidents, sufficed for the slight amount of traffic.

"Well," said St. Victor, when he saw Malabry suddenly pull up, "I suppose this is your noted ford, and we shall now hear what your plan is."

"We shall be in the shade and had better wait here," returned the taciturn driver; turning his horses to the left, and leaping down from his box, he stationed them under some poplars by the edge of the stream.

"What are we to wait for?" asked St. Victor.

"The carriage."

"And what for?"

"To save the woman and drown the *blues*. You see the stream?"

"Yes, and it does not look as if it would take a man up much above his waist."

"No further than that, if you take ten steps to the left, up the stream. But if you go straight before you, in the middle of the stream you fall into a pool fifteen feet deep, which goes down the river for some way."

"I see, all the footmarks point to the left. Those who belong to the country know where the safe passage lies."

"Yes, but the gendarmes do not."

"And do you think the officer will be foolish enough to drive in blindly?"

"No, I think he will first ask why we have not crossed. I shall reply that we were told at Gourlay it was rather dangerous, so that I want to try the ford myself before I take the horses over."

"Well?"

"Then I shall enter the stream just in a line with the road, and as I know how to swim and yet look all the time as if I were walking, I shall cross without wetting myself above the arm-pits and scat myself on the opposite bank, shouting out that the ford is excellent."

"I begin to see it now."

"Then he will drive on, plunge into the hole, and find himself, the woman, and the gendarmes in the water. Then I shall plunge in, you know I swim like a fish, in three strokes I can reach the woman and bring her over to this side, while the *blues* get a sousing. The Egyptian cannot bear the water, so that will put him out."

"And what are we to do?"

"You must be sitting on the box, ready to touch up the horses. Tamerlane will stand close by the step, and help me to hoist up the woman if she has fainted. As soon as all four of us are up, off we go, leaving the gendarmes in the water, our horses' heads are turned, and in five minutes we shall be back in the forest of Lyons, where we shall find friends to give us a change of clothes. Then we will sleep at Andely's to-night, and Paris to-morrow."

"Your plan seems ingenious, but a trifle might make it miscarry, such as the arrival of a peasant who might point out the proper ford."

"It is not market-day either at Gisors or Gournay, so the peasants will be all at home."

"How do you know that their coachman has not been this way before?"

"That drunkard? There is no danger. I learnt yesterday that he had never been to Dieppe by this road. Besides, the ford has altered since the heavy rains fell last winter."

"And do you think the officer will consent to his carriage crossing over before ours?"

"Yes, for he does not care much about travelling in our society, and is scarcely likely to show us such politeness as to wait for our carriage to be brought up."

"Well, you have an answer to every objection, and as this is our last chance, I give way."

"Hush!" whispered Malabry. "I think I hear the carriage descending the hill."

"Oh, then the officer cannot have stopped at Gournay!"

"I am sure it is the carriage. You know what we have to do. Tamerlane must stay at the horses' heads, while you accompany me to the wrong ford, and as soon as the gendarmes arrive, give me orders to sound it."

Malabry meanwhile was hastily removing his boots, and taking off the long driving-coat which might have impeded his swimming. Having laid this and his top-boots in the car, he walked to the brink of the river, followed by St. Victor, and turned his back on the road, examining the water and gesticulating with great animation. Words he did not waste, for this pantomime was simply intended for the benefit of the carriage just arriving. It rolled quickly down the hill, and Barbot, who was driving, checked his horses on finding the road blocked by two men. St. Victor appeared startled by the sound, and as he turned round and saw the officer seated by the side of his prisoner, he raised his hat, saying: "I could scarcely hope, sir, that you would overtake us so soon."

The hood of the carriage had been thrown back, which was fortunate, as it would ensure Louise Maneheu's being able to move freely when the shipwreck arranged by Malabry should arrive. Jacobin, who was running behind, came and rubbed himself against the friend of his mistress, but the captain looked very glum. It was obvious that this meeting did not please him.

"I am in a hurry to get on to Gisors," said he curtly.

"In greater haste than ourselves, I see," returned St. Victor, "so I am glad to be able to do you a service. I was told at Gournay that there was some risk about this ford, so my coachman, who is an excellent swimmer, means to go in and sound the stream. As soon as he has tried it, you can cross without risk, and as you are in such haste, we will follow."

"I am much obliged, but your precautions seem quite uncalled for. I too made inquiry and was assured that this stream might easily be forded anywhere, unless perhaps, on the right-hand side, where there was a hole that might easily be avoided. So, if you will allow me, I shall cross at once."

St. Victor finding no answer, was forced to bow and step back. Louise had self-command enough not to look at him, but Barbot had entered into conversation with Malabry from the top of his box.

"Keep an eye on me, my man," the Chouan was saying, "and follow

me close, if you don't wish to go to the bottom. There is no such unpalatable drink as running water in the dog-days, I assure you."

"Hold your tongue, boy! A man who has bathed in the Nile, in the teeth of crocodiles, need not fear a river which can produce nothing but cels."

Malabry was so piqued that he plunged into the water at once and was up to his knees before the old corporal had gathered up the reins and urged forward his horses.

"I wish you a pleasant journey, sir," said St. Victor, with an affectation of politeness that was not lost upon Robert, but he was too busy watching the progress of the carriage to reply.

All went well at first, the water did not even reach the horses' hanches, and Jacobin was the only swimmer. "This way," cried Malabry, suddenly; he had plunged up to his shoulders in the water, but managed to hold himself erect, as if he were still on his feet. "This way, Egyptian, beware of the left hand side—there is a hole over there."

The Egyptian, who was not quite at his ease for all his boasting, thought it best to take the advice and swerve a little to the right. It was a most unlucky step. The horses suddenly found themselves out of their depth, and in losing their footing, gave such a jerk to the carriage that it was overturned in the very middle of the stream. The officer, his prisoner, and the two gendarmes seated opposite to them, were under water in a second. Only the corporal managed to retain his seat, and began to beat his horses and swear like mad.

"This is the decisive moment," murmured St. Victor, who was watching anxiously. Malabry, too, had disappeared, but voluntarily, for he had dived. The officer was the first to come to the surface, he seized the carriage with one hand, while with the other he endeavoured to collar one of the gendarmes who had just come within his reach. The unfortunate man was, however, swept away by the current, and nothing was seen of his comrade.

"Swimming seems an art greatly neglected among the picked gendarmes," said Tamerlane, much delighted. St. Victor thought of nothing but Louise Maneheu, and was about to throw off his coat and plunge into the water too, when he suddenly caught sight of the young woman, who had been carried some way down the stream, and of Malabry, a little higher up, swimming vigorously to her aid. Everything seemed likely to answer. Barbot was urging forward his vehicle as a pilot might his boat, and his horses were swimming towards the opposite bank, bearing with them the angry officer. The two gendarmes did not seem likely to reappear, while Louise Maneheu was upheld by her cloak, and Malabry had only to make a few more strokes to reach her.

"Bring up the car," cried St. Victor, "and turn the horses' heads away from the river, to be ready for the instant when Malabry brings the woman." Tamerlane obeyed, while the officer's carriage was dragged on to the opposite bank, and Robert began to shake his fist at the other travellers. "Oh!" cried St. Victor, "Louise has sunk!"

"Yes, but Malabry has dived under to find her—I see a bit of her cloak further down, he will reach her—or else the dog will, for he is swimming towards her too."

"Yes, there—the animal has got the cloak between his teeth—Malabry is trying to catch another end of it—but the current is too swift. No matter, Louise is saved!"

"Yes, from death, but lost to us, my friend. The dog is dragging her towards the wrong shore—Malabry has caught the other end of the cloak, but it is too late."

"True, indeed! The dog has landed the woman, and turns to bark furiously at Malabry—he is biting him—Malabry has let go—and high time too, for here come the officer and corporal to the rescue!"

"Here comes our dear comrade swimming back to us."

"What must we do now?"

"Drive off, as hard as we can. Here comes Malabry, looking like a Triton! Ask him if he does not agree with me."

"You awkward fellow!" cried St. Victor.

"Awkward indeed? I should like to have seen you in my place. Look how I have been treated by that wretched dog." And he showed the marks left on his arm by Jacobin's teeth.

"Well, the first thing for us is to drive off, unless we mean those gendarmes to be after us."

"They are not showing any great eagerness."

Major Robert, assisted by the faithful Barbot, was indeed fully occupied with settling his prisoner on the cushions of the carriage, to which he had carried her in his arms. The Chouans on the opposite bank could see Louise recovering consciousness, and the officer lavishing his interested attentions upon her, while the over-zealous Jacobin stood on his hind-legs by the carriage door, licking her hands. The corporal, however, after examining the springs and harness, and ascertaining they had not been injured by the accident, mounted the box and was already gathering up the reins. It was evident that the major did not mean to trouble himself any further about the fate of his two unlucky gendarmes, but to drive on at once to Gisors, and thus secure Louise against any further attempts.

"No," said Malabry, "he will not pursue us now, for we are three against two, but as soon as he reaches Gisors, he will be sending his dear friends after us. I tell you it is high time to retrace our steps and make for the forest of Lyons. We will leave the car at our friend's house, and strike across on foot to join the high road from Rouen."

"And leave Maneheu's wife in the hands of the police!" exclaimed St. Victor, stamping his foot. "I will never consent to that. Let us cross the stream and attack them."

"You forget that in ten minutes we should have half-a-dozen peasants upon us," replied Tamerlane, pointing out a cart which was driving down the Gisors highway. "Besides," added he in a low tone, "don't you think that we have done enough for this persecuted beauty? When she gets to Paris, it will rest with our friend Liardot to get her out of the scrape."

"Well, if we must beat a retreat," sighed St. Victor, "let us discharge our pistols at these robbers."

"I should be afraid of touching Madame Maneheu if I aimed at her gaoler," said Tamerlane. "But I would fire if I could be sure of only hitting the dog who has served us such a trick—"

"I should be sorry to have him hurt," broke in the lieutenant.

"The poor animal could not guess that Malabry was about to save his mistress, and besides, I have a presentiment that he may help us to find her again."

"Unless he should help Fouché to arrest us."

"Drive on, coachman," and their horses started in one direction, just as Barbot urged on his in another, and the Chouans heard Robert's powerful

voice crying after them : "Farewell, gentlemen ! You shall hear from me soon."

IV.

TEN days had elapsed since George Cadoudal set foot upon French soil, and the Parisians were far from suspecting that the most dangerous enemy of the new government was quietly occupying a house within a stone's throw of the Tuileries. He was known to have had an audience of Bonaparte after the pacification of La Vendée and to have declined his offer of a colonelcy in the new army, after which he had joined the Bourbon princes in their exile. No one, however, except Fouché, paid much attention to what was going on upon the other side of the Channel.

Paris was, at that time, wholly given up to pleasure and gaiety, and the hot seasons of 1802-3, made open-air entertainments all the rage. The week following the landing at Biville was distinguished by a stifling heat, and on the 31st August there was to be a grand fête in the once famous Tivoli gardens. This combined all sorts of attractions, illuminated groves, Italian gardens full of fountains, magic seats, and water surprises, English gardens strewn with artificial hillocks occupied by fanev shepherdesses, dairies, theatrical entertainments, jugglers, acrobats, fortune-tellers, and many other amusements. The higher classes flocked mainly around the two bands which played for dancing, and here, among the throng, might be seen the two supposed cousins Valréas advancing arm in arm. Their recent adventures in common had cemented a friendship commenced during the campaign, and obliterated the distinctions of rank between a mere private soldier who had joined the conspiracy and the first lieutenant of George Cadoudal.

They were so elegantly dressed that even Major Robert would scarcely have recognised his travelling-companions ; Tamerlane, indeed, seemed perfectly transfigured, and it was easy to see from his admiring glances that this was his first visit to Tivoli. "I declare," suddenly exclaimed St. Victor, "that if you will gape about you like that, I— what a pretty creature !" cried he, suddenly cutting short his admonition, to express his admiration of a young woman seated under an artificial tree, on a piece of sham turf.

"Where is the beauty who makes you so ecstatic ?" asked Tamerlane.

"There—on that seat—have you no eyes ?" said St. Victor, under his breath.

"Ah, but there are two of them ! Which is it you admire so much ?"

"What a question ! I only see one with any claims to beauty."

"I suppose you mean the one in the yellow dress, with a coral necklace and a cornelian ornament the size of a saucer ?"

"Are you mad ? She may hide her face under a Pamela bonnet, but it is easy to see she is quite old."

"Just past her prime, that is all. What a majestic figure she has. A perfect Juno !"

"I am no admirer of Junos. I mean her neighbour, that lovely young girl in white. Look at her beautiful black hair, and what a complexion and eyes !"

"Her eyes are certainly handsome, and I believe they are fixed on us, but—"

"Her teeth! Just look, she is smiling now! They are a set of pearls! And then her foot, such an aristocratic little foot in that sandalled slipper!"

"Something like the *cothurnus* of the Roman ladies," said Tamerlane, who never missed an opportunity of displaying his erudition. "Still, I must confess I prefer her companion."

"Nonsense, you have no taste, and do not deserve to look at my beauty. Go and listen to the farce they are acting down yonder, and leave me to enjoy myself. I hear the violins tuning up, and mean to ask the young lady to honour me with her hand for the first dance."

"Oh, I am not going to leave you—could I ask Juno for hers?"

"You would spoil sport. Go and find some other divinity; there are plenty at Tivoli, but pray leave me to myself."

And elbowing off his learned friend, St. Victor advanced, hat in hand, towards the two ladies. The younger was certainly a charming figure, her grace was even more remarkable than her beauty, and her modest yet dignified carriage was something uncommon in those days, when assurance was all the fashion. At that moment, certainly, St. Victor thought little about the character or breeding of the young person who had captivated him thus at first sight. He did not choose to notice that she blushed and cast down her eyes as he approached; he bowed with perfect ease and made his request, adroitly coupling it with a compliment to her duenna. To his discomfiture, the reply came from the latter.

"We are not dancing, sir," said she, bridling somewhat. "Two women left by themselves at Tivoli must be particular, as you will understand; and since my husband has left us while he has gone to see the play—"

"Oh, Madame," cried St. Victor, seizing his chance, "how delighted I should be to act as your protector till he returns! You are quite right in saying that two women, especially if they are pretty, require an escort, and if you will accept me as such, pray consider me at the disposal of your self and your—sister."

This impudent flattery did not fail in its effect, and the lady answered graciously: "We are greatly obliged, but it would not be quite proper. The young lady is not my sister, but she has been entrusted to my charge, and I do not know whether—"

St. Victor was ready with a fresh compliment, but the young lady put a stop to them by saying, in a decided tone: "Excuse me, sir, I cannot dance." The young man was not generally bashful, but this time he felt disconcerted, less by her simple answer than the air of offended modesty which accompanied it; it reminded him that a man of good breeding, even at Tivoli, owed some respect to a woman who could respect herself. He made a low bow, and turning on his heel with inimitable grace, rejoined Tamerlane, who had been a spectator of this scene. The part of the garden to which they now directed their steps, was devoted mainly to the fire-works, and beneath an artificial cascade supposed to represent the famous falls of the real Tivoli under the Sybil's Temple, immense scaffoldings were erected for one of Ruggieri's grand displays.

St. Victor concerned himself little about these preparations, and leaving Tamerlane to quote Horace and chatter about the latest doings of the First Consul, sought to find a place where he might be likely to catch sight of the two ladies he had just left, if they should chance to come that way in order to see the final spectacle, announced as *Phaeton, the child of the Sun, struck by a thunderbolt from Jupiter, which sets all the gardens on fire*

St. Victor had an impressionable and affectionate nature, and though his roving life had hitherto prevented his yielding much to the tender passion, he had an ardent longing for domestic joys ; he had brooded over the subject since he returned to Paris, and was thus prepared to fall in love at first sight with a charming girl, and though at first piqued by the refusal he had received, was now all anxiety to see her again. The last strains of music had died away on the air, and the crowd was surging towards the lower part of the park to enjoy the fireworks and illuminations. The two friends, who had planted themselves on one of the artificial mounds, soon found themselves so closely surrounded that it would have been impossible to move ; happily they were perfectly satisfied with their position, for Tamerlane was bent on seeing the fall of the aspiring Phaeton, whom, under his breath, he was comparing to the usurper, while St. Victor had just espied the charming dark-eyed maiden not far from the eminence on which he was standing ; she was escorted by the stout lady, and by a meagre-looking little man who seemed likely to be the husband.

The lieutenant kept this interesting group in sight, and did everything in his power to attract the young lady's attention, but her beautiful eyes remained obstinately fixed on the pasteboard temple before her. The first rocket soon rose into the air, and was hailed with enthusiastic shouts, the crowd pressed forward till it became so dense that a pin could scarcely have dropped to the ground ; the air was soon filled with brilliant flashes and trails of light, and the illuminations of the fountains was ardently expected by all. A jet of flame suddenly sprang from the Sybil's Temple, penetrating the cloud of grey smoke which overhung the artificial rocks, and kindling a long line of coloured lights which at once transformed the stream into a Styx. A general cry of admiration rose from the crowd, broken however by complaints and invectives from those into whose faces sparks had been blown by the breeze ; among these was Tamerlane, who caught one in his eye, while he was succeeding in attracting the gaze of the Juno he admired.

"What a dangerous exhibition this is," said he to his friend, as he rubbed the injured orb. "If this artificial mound on which you have chosen to perch yourself were to catch fire, we should be roasted like larks on a spit !"

"Pon my word," returned St. Victor in a low voice, "I should be delighted to see a conflagration just now."

"Are you out of your senses ?"

"Not in the least. It would furnish me with an opportunity for reinstating myself in that adorable creature's good graces."

"What an idea ! Just like you ! For my part I should not care to be roasted, even for the sake of Juno's eyes. Besides, how should we save her in this throng ? If we had only brought Malabry with us, but you insisted on my leaving him behind."

"Certainly I did. A fine figure we should have cut with such a boor in our company ! But here comes the chariot of the sun."

Phaeton, with his chariot and horses, all of pasteboard, was perched aloft on a theatrical scaffolding and thrown into strong relief by means of red lights, while Jupiter, represented by a figure placed above, was brandishing a gilt paper thunderbolt filled with petards. At a given signal, the imprudent child of the sun started on his aerial journey by gliding down an inclined plane furnished with little cross bars, on encountering which it was expected to give some jerks that might pass muster for the swerving

of Apollo's horses. All went well at first, and, thanks to the Bengal lights, the illusion during the early part of the descent was perfect. But when the lord of the thunder came to punish the audacious driver, he was too violent in his measures. The fire communicated to the chariot by a train of gunpowder brought about such a terrific explosion that the whole affair fell to the ground, where chariot, horses and driver were speedily consumed.

This accident had startled and alarmed the crowd, but might have led to no further mischief, had not Phaeton, in his fall, brought down several yew-trees covered with lamps, which instantly set fire to the mounds of painted wood. The frightful tumult that ensued may be better imagined than described. Those spectators who had stationed themselves on these combustible eminences leaped into the midst of the surrounding groups, and threw them into terrible confusion. A regular panic set in; women began to shriek, and men to try to fight their way out; in the midst of it all, St. Victor could recognise Juno's voice crying for help, and the gentler accents of the young girl, saying, "Alas, we are lost!"

The young man had been one of the first to leap down, followed by Tamerlane, who was so awkward in his movements as to knock down two or three people in the group below, and bump against the stout lady whose charms had excited his admiration. Juno caught hold of his coat, and the two rolled down together, carrying the husband with them in their fall. St. Victor had calculated his spring better, and alighted on the only vacant spot on the greensward, whence, by a judicious use of his fists, he managed to work his way towards the young girl, arriving just in time to save her from being thrown down.

"Have no fear, Mademoiselle, I am here," said he, abruptly. She was half tottering, and he caught her in his arms; she attempted at first to release herself, but soon recognised that her life was in jeopardy, and that the young man was bent only on saving her.

"I trust myself in your hands, sir," murmured she, "but, for heaven's sake, pray save Madame Desrosiers."

"My friend will look after her. Let me take you out. We have not a minute to lose."

These curt sentences, spoken in the tone of a man accustomed to command and to brave danger, produced an impression on the young girl, and she no longer attempted any resistance.

St. Victor had placed himself behind her so as to make a rampart against those pushing forward, while his stalwart arms were extended to cleave the crowd before her and protect her from any pressure on the sides. An hour ago, he might have been tempted to clasp her to his heart and thank fate for thus consoling him for the waltz he had been refused, but the immediate peril sobered him now. The fire was rapidly spreading to all the painted canvass and other inflammable materials of which the garden was full, but the crowd was even more terrible than the flames. People were shrieking with terror, and rushing from every part of the grounds towards the only exit; women had lost their senses, while the men seemed converted into brutes by the instinct of self-preservation, and were forcing a way for themselves by trampling down the feeble. Girls with dishevelled hair might be seen trying to climb on their neighbours' shoulders, and desperate mothers lifting their children high in their arms to protect them from the surging sea of humanity below.

Still St. Victor contrived to force his way onwards, his strength, even more than his skill, enabling him to save the young girl from a fall or even

a shock. She bore up bravely and uttered no word of complaint, only speaking once to ask whether her friend were saved. St. Victor had no wish to turn round, so he said she was just behind, though he had little idea of what had become of Tamerlane and the Desrosiers, and felt vexed at having lost sight of his comrade, who might have been of great assistance at this juncture. The further they advanced, the greater appeared the difficulty of effecting an exit, and St. Victor could not help feeling the greatest anxiety about the inevitable collision at the gates, where the ground unfortunately sloped, and the stream of people was converted into a cataract.

St. Victor did his utmost to stem the torrent, but the poor girl he was protecting, though tall and slim, scarcely reached the shoulders of the big men around her, and was feeling already half suffocated. The young man thought for a moment of raising her in his arms to give her more air, but told himself that he should not have strength enough to support her long, and that if he were to stumble with his burthen, it would be all over with them both.

"We are near the gates now," said he gently. "Only be brave!"

"I am brave," murmured she faintly. St. Victor saw she was ready to faint, and only kept herself up by a desperate effort. He too summoned all his energy and continued to advance, or, rather, to allow himself to be carried on, for his feet scarcely touched the ground.

They were now close to the gates, which in spite of the brilliant flames, were made invisible by the clouds of dust raised by the crowd, and shrieks and cries of distress arose from the stream precipitated onward by the pressure from behind. Mingling with these cries, came a sound of clashing sabres and neighing horses; the military had evidently been summoned to restore order, but how were a few horsemen to control the panic-stricken impulses of a mob of several thousands?

The Rue St Lazare, upon which the gardens debouched, was very narrow in those days, so that the crowd, even when outside, could not disperse promptly, and St. Victor, in his desperation, looked round vainly in the hope of lighting on some sympathetic face to which he might appeal for assistance in protecting a woman; appeals were however fruitless, he himself was hopelessly jammed in, and thrown forward by the throng behind, and he could hear the young girl murmur, "I am dying—good-bye!"

He made one last effort to secure her a little more air and space, by trampling back those at his heels, while he rested his hands on the colossal back of the inexorable man in front of the girl; he felt that in a few minutes she would be slipping down and be crushed to death beneath his feet. A sudden recollection of the defenders once summoned to his aid on the Breton heaths by uttering the magic cry of the Chouans, made him use it now, though it seemed hardly likely to have much effect on a Parisian crowd.

The hoot of the owl was however instantly answered by a more sonorous hoot. "Here!" shouted St. Victor, never stopping to ask from whom the sound had proceeded. He saw two hands laid on the shoulders of the colossus in front, and an enormous red head appearing which he recognized instantly as Malabry's. "Use your fist!" cried St. Victor, and down it came on the man's skull, clearing the way in front, while Malabry's other arm was extended to seize the young girl by her scarf and bear her forward. St. Victor passed his arm round her waist, and thus supporting her, stepped over the prostrate giant and clung to Malabry's coat. They were

thus towed along by the victorious Chouan, who, using his head as a battering-ram, forced his way through the formidable crowd into the street, and threading a passage between the carriage and mounted soldiery, reached a corner where it was possible to stop and take breath. There St. Victor discovered his charge to be fainting away, and had only time to catch her and prevent her falling to the ground.

"Call a cab, instantly," said he to Malabry.

"What! Do you mean to take that pretty little thing home?" growled the Hercules.

"Not to her own home, certainly, for I don't know where she lives, and she is not in a state to tell me."

"Then where do you mean to take her?"

"To my home, of course!"

"Are you mad? Can you have forgotten Cadoudal's orders, forbidding any of us, on pain of death, to receive any one at our own house, more especially a woman?"

"This is no ordinary woman. Besides, I am not going to keep her there, and Cadoudal will never know of it."

"Well, you are my superior officer, and must interpret orders as you please, but, for my part, I would rather cut off my hand than disobey the general."

"And quite right too! I will give up all thoughts of taking this child to my rooms, but what am I to do with her?"

"Leave her here."

"What! Can you advise me to desert a poor young thing, half dead with fatigue and terror! Why did you help me to save her, if you would leave her now to perish in the street?"

"It was not she, but you that I tried to save. I have nothing to do with petticoats."

"Why, you risked your life to rescue Louise Mancheu!"

"Not because she was a woman, but because she was a devoted comrade, without whom we should all have been captured at Biville."

"Well, but that is no reason for behaving cruelly to this girl, and I am determined not to desert her."

"As you please. I am going, and only regret that I ever entered that horrid enclosure. I was walking out because, as usual, I felt stifled in the city, and as I passed, I heard the fiddles and crackers, and was tempted in by some imp of mischief; if you had not met me, you would have made your own way out, and your princess would have been trampled to death, and there would have been an end of the matter."

St. Victor made no reply to this savage speech, but struck his forehead, and cried, "I have it! I will take her to Liardot's."

"Do you mean Fleur-de-Rose?"

"Yes, Jacques Sourdat, as he calls himself now, it is all the same thing. I know where he lives, and George's orders do not apply to his quarters."

"Why has the General made an exception in his case?"

"For political reasons which I am bound to keep secret."

"Will you give me your word of honour that you are speaking the truth?"

"Yes, I am ready to swear it."

"Very well then. There is a cab hailing us! Carry the woman to it, and I will go with you."

It was indeed high time to remove the unconscious form of the young

girl, for the crowd emerging from Tivoli was beginning to cluster round the group of whom the first fugitives, in their alarm, had taken little notice. It occasioned little surprise, however, to see another victim of the accident lifted into a carriage. St. Victor climbed on the wheel, and whispered into the driver's ear: "Rue des Prouvaires, at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré, the first house on the right. A gold piece if you take us there in twenty minutes." He did not care to shout out Liardot's address, nor would it have been advisable in such a crowd.

"All right," said the man, with a knowing look. St. Victor jumped into the carriage, followed by Malabry, and the driver earned his promised fare by reaching their destination within eighteen minutes. Throughout the drive, the young girl lay on the cushions, while the lieutenant knelt before her, vainly trying to restore her to consciousness by striking the palms of her hands. Malabry looked on in silence, and shrugged his shoulders.

"You must stay outside and act sentry to make sure we have not been followed," said St. Victor, "while I carry this child upstairs." Malabry made no objection, and having dismissed the cab, planted himself against a wall facing Liardot's house. As there was no porter, no one saw St. Victor enter with the young girl in his arms; he ran up to the third floor, and rang at his old friend's door. What was his surprise when it opened, to find Louise Maneheu standing before him!

Their surprise was, indeed, mutual, but there was no time for explanations, and the lieutenant stepped in, saying: "Please close the door and help me to restore this poor child to life."

Louise closed the door, shot the bolt, and said simply: "Come into my room." She led the way down a corridor to a small chamber, furnished with a chest of drawers and a bed, where the Chouan deposited his lovely burthen, and then asked whether Liardot were at home. "No," replied Louise, "but he will be back soon," and she hastened to bring water and moisten the temples of the poor girl, who turned and uttered a few incoherent words, though she had not yet come to herself.

Presently, however, her eyes unclosed, and she murmured in a faint voice: "Where am I?"

"With friends, Mademoiselle," said St. Victor gently.

"Friends? What has happened? Oh, I remember now—the crowd—those shrieks—I was suffocating—more than half dead—and it was you that saved me."

She made an effort to rise, but sank back again, and her eyelids closed. After tossing about for a minute or two, her hands sank on her breast which rose and fell steadily in the deep slumber which at the age of twenty succeeds any great mental shock or physical strain.

Louise laid her finger to her lips and signed to St. Victor to follow her to Liardot's room; this adjoined her own, and might, from its simplicity, have been taken for an anchorite's cell, save for a cavalry sabre and two pistols, hung above the camp-bed, and carefully polished. Side by side with these reminiscences of Fleur-de-Rose's campaigns hung a black ebony frame containing a portrait veiled with crape, which probably recalled some sad episode in Liardot's financial career under the Directory. Further on stood a table laden with papers, on which Sourdat drew up his reports, suggesting the sad part the old royalist had now undertaken to play in hopes of benefiting the cause to which he was attached.

St. Victor's eyes roamed round this ascetic retreat without finding any-

thing to explain Louise's presence there. The descendant of the Le Grave reads a question on his countenance, and hastened to meet it half-way. "You wish to know how it is you find me here?" said she. "I am going to tell you, but first let me thank you for your efforts to save me."

"I was greatly disappointed by their not succeeding," returned St. Victor, "and am delighted to find that some one else has been more fortunate."

"It was all his doing, M. Liardot's."

"So I suppose, but how did he manage it? Can he have made an attack on your jailer between Gisors and Paris?"

"No, after that incident at the ford, I was guarded more strictly. When we reached Paris, I was taken before a man who put many questions to me which I declined to answer; then I was shut up in a kind of pavilion at the end of a large garden, and told that next day, if I still persisted in refusing to denounce our friends, I should be thrown into prison and never come out again. I had made up my mind to suffer anything rather than betray our secrets, but that very night I was rescued."

"By whom?" exclaimed St. Victor, much surprised.

"M. Liardot knew of my arrival; one of our friends had shown him the pavilion where I was kept prisoner. In the dead of night, my generous protector scaled the garden wall, forced open the window, and brought me out through a secret door of which he had secured the key by bribing a jailer."

"What? Did he manage all that without coming across a patrol or any of Fouché's agents, for I have no doubt it was Fouché who questioned you, and it was at his place that you were temporarily detained?"

"I do not know. M. Liardot has never told me. But thanks to his courage and devotion, I was spared all anxiety, for I felt sure he would have died in my defence if the police had attacked us." This was said with so much animation that St. Victor looked at Louise more closely.

"This is a strange affair," thought he, "I can scarcely understand why that impassive Liardot should compromise himself to such a degree for Mancheu's wife." And he resumed aloud: "So he brought you here then?"

"Yes."

"And you have not been discovered by the police who must be in quest of you?"

"No, I pass for M. Liardot's servant, and no one takes any notice of me."

"I suppose you never go out?"

"Oh, yes, I go out to buy what is required for the house. But who could recognize me in this dress?"

The wife of the opulent Norman farmer had indeed disguised herself as a poor servant-maid. Her gold cross had disappeared, a humble linen cap had replaced her lace head dress, and she had not hesitated to don a common cotton gown, and cross a thin kerchief over her bosom. Still she looked handsome, even in this humble guise, and the young Chouan thought the inhabitants of that quarter must be blind indeed, if they failed to notice her.

"The police have good eyes," returned he, "and you will do well to be prudent. But have you no tidings of your husband?"

"No," said the young woman, colouring slightly. "M. Liardot has told me that Pierre left Biville with General Cadoudal and that he must be in Paris, but he does not yet know where."

"This seems still more strange," thought St. Victor.

"And now," resumed Louise, "allow me to put a few questions in return. What happened to you after we parted, and—what accident has befallen that young girl?"

She had ended her inquiry with some hesitation, and St. Victor also hesitated before replying.

"I met her by chance at a public ball," said he with some embarrassment, "and was fortunate enough to be able to save her from being crushed to death in the crowd. I succeeded in rescuing her from a frightful throng, but she was not in a state to tell me where she lived, so I brought her here."

"It was quite right, and M. Liardot will be grateful to you for relying on his assistance in this work of charity. He will be here in a few minutes."

"I am glad to hear it, for I stand in need of advice, and no one else can give it me. But what have you done with that dog of yours?"

"Jacobin saved my life in that stream, and I shall never part with him. But I cannot keep the poor animal shut up here all day long, so he goes out every evening with M. Liardot."

"Well," said St. Victor, "since you mention that adventure at the ford, I had better let you know, even at the risk of injuring your opinion of Jacobin, that without him—"

Here he was interrupted by a ring at the bell. "That is M. Liardot," said the farmer's wife, and she hastened to open. She drew back the bolt and unlocked the door, which yielded instantly to the pressure of Jacobin's paws. The dog darted at once to his mistress and began to fawn upon her, while Liardot, who followed, started back in surprise on seeing St. Victor.

"You did not expect to find me here, I know, but you might welcome me all the same," said the young Chouan, darting towards him. Liardot's face however expressed so much suspicion that St. Victor hastened to say: "Do not be afraid, dear friend, I have not sold myself to the government, and my sudden appearance here is simply owing to my having met with a most romantic adventure; a young girl has been rescued from the jaws of death by your humble servant, who could not take her to his own house because of the General's orders, and thought that they did not apply to yours."

"You were mistaken in your supposition," said Liardot coldly.

"Indeed! Yet you do not seem to be quite alone," returned St. Victor, glancing at Louise.

"Is this young girl still here?" asked the supposed Sourdats, taking no notice of this allusion.

"Yes, sir, she is lying on my bed fast asleep," interposed Louise Maneheu. "The poor little thing was half dead with fright, but this sleep will soon restore her, and I am going to watch by her side till she opens her eyes," added she, gliding into her room, which opened on the corridor.

"Come with me," said Liardot as soon as they found themselves alone, "I have something to say to you," and leading him into his chamber, he continued: "Will you never learn wisdom? What is this last folly?"

"I have already told you," replied the young man drily, "that I thought you would allow me to take refuge here with a child who was half dead; if you refuse to receive us, I will awake her and remove her at once."

"You know that my house is always open to you, but you are probably

unaware that your entrance has been observed and that the house is being watched. I have just seen some suspicious-looking characters in the street."

"Oh, you must have taken Malabry for a spy. I left him there to act sentry."

"He is fidelity itself, but not very prudent, and if he were to take it into his head to assault the man whom I saw not far from here, we should all be seriously compromised."

"Malabry is wiser than you give him credit for, and will not strike the first blow. And now let me tell you, dear Liardot, that your house abounds in mysteries; on my first visit I find a woman installed here whom I have twice made a fruitless attempt to rescue; I am glad, though rather surprised, to find you have been more lucky."

Liardot was piqued by the ironical tone of this speech, and returned gravely: "Spare me any childish inuendoes. I am not bound to offer any explanation of Louise Maneheu's presence here, but I choose to give it. After parting from you at Billville, I took refuge from the storm at the farm of Bois-Guillaume, where I again fell in with the gendarme officer, who told me of the arrest that had been made, and of his intention of taking the woman on to Paris. I proceeded thither at once, and acquainted Fouché with what had happened, at least, with as much as I chose he should know. Within four days the prisoner was in Paris, and Fouché cross-questioned her, but, being unable to elicit anything from the brave woman, sent for me to see what I could do. I then suggested a plan which took his fancy. Louise Maneheu was to be allowed apparently to escape from the pavilion where she was detained, I decoying her away to my house by professing to be a friend whom the Chouans had sent to rescue her: there I was gradually to win from her, by skill and kindness, the secrets she now refused to betray. This was carried out, and she has been living here for the last week."

"That was a capital idea, but have you informed her of the pretext by which you succeeded in releasing her?"

"Why should I? It is quite enough for George and one or two friends of my own to know the secret of my connection with Fouché."

"In that case, you are placing both her and yourself in a false position, and were I in your place, I should have sent Louise back at once to her husband, who must be in Paris."

"I have no doubt he is, but as I have not yet seen Cadoudal, I cannot tell where. But you forget the double part I have to play: were I to take or send Louise to her husband, one of Fouché's spies would be at our heels, and in an hour or two the police would have the clue to our conspiracy. As I have told you, I recognised some one watching the house when I came in just now."

"Whew! I am sorry already to have come, but I must say, Beware! Louise is young and handsome, and though you may be fifty, you have still a heart—"

Liardot, who had turned white with emotion, interrupted his young friend by seizing his arm with one hand, while, with the other, he raised the crape which veiled the portrait on the wall: "That is the picture of the woman I loved," said he in a hollow voice, "and my heart will never again be free, for I love her still." And he drooped his head to hide two large tears that were coursing down his sunburnt cheeks.

"Forgive me, dear friend," murmured St. Victor, "for having involuntarily awakened such sad memories. I have no right to give

you advice, but allow me just to ask how this strange situation is to end?"

"Pierre Maneheu's wife must remain here till there is an opportunity for sending her away disguised, not merely from Paris, but out of France. I shall then have to persuade Fouché that she has eluded my vigilance and escaped. At present, however, I am too well watched, and I have one enemy who seems jealous of the favour I am in with his master, and lies in wait for an opportunity of denouncing me. Even that dog you see there causes me untold anxieties."

"How so?" asked St. Victor.

"Because Fouché has only left him with us in the hope that he may assist us in discovering Louise's accomplices. I have orders to take the dog out to places of public resort, and if he appears to recognise any one, note the man and follow him. This suggestion, I have reason to believe, emanated from Major Robert."

"I am not surprised, for he has derived much assistance already from this over-intelligent animal. But for it, we should twice have been able to deliver Maneheu's wife."

"I have heard the whole story, and should be sorry if your imprudence were to reach Cadoudal's ears. But now how do you mean to get out of this scrape of bringing a stranger to a house where, as you must see, it is impossible for her to remain? Are you going to take her back to her own home?"

"Certainly, and if we ever meet again, it will be there."

"Very well. But what is her social status? Do you know her name?"

"No indeed, for we have not exchanged a dozen words, but I imagine she belongs to the *bourgeoisie*, for the stout party who chaperoned her did not look quite like a duchess, though Tamerlane was captivated by her, and she was dressed up to the eyes. I caught sight of a bald-headed man who was probably the husband."

"These worthy people are, no doubt, anxious about their child or ward, and will make an effort to find her. As soon as the girl comes to herself, you must discover where she lives, and take her home at once."

"What, to-night?"

"Yes, to-night, when no one can notice you, whereas—"

The door opened softly, and Louise Maneheu said: "She has just awaked and asks to see you."

"Now, my dear fellow, you can arrange everything as I suggest," said Liardot. "Take her away at once; I am only sorry she has seen Louise."

"I will take her this very moment, if she can walk," exclaimed St. Victor.

"She has recovered her strength by this short rest," said Maneheu's wife.

"Then I am ready to take her home."

"I thank you, and congratulate you on your prudence," rejoined Liardot. "Let this young girl believe that this is your house and Louise your servant; but do not tell her where she has been. When you get into the street, notice whether you see any people of suspicious appearance about. Send Malabry home to bed, and do not stop talking with him. There is a cab-stand close by, and within an hour you may be safe out of a ticklish adventure, and—I may add, will have done a good deed."

"I will follow your instructions in every point. Only tell me where and when we may meet again."

"Here, and to-morrow if you choose," replied Liardot. "I am to see George that evening, and may have orders to transmit to you; I shall not be in till eleven, but shall expect you any hour of the night, for I shall be glad to hear the end of your adventure."

"Good-bye till to-morrow then," said St. Victor, "you may depend upon my prudence." And pressing Liardot's hand, he took Louise's and kissed it respectfully before she could withdraw it, and then departed on tiptoe to knock gently at his protégée's door.

"Come in," said a tremulous voice. He entered and found the young girl on her feet. The light of a lamp fell upon her face, and he felt actually dazzled by the beauty of which he had had but a faint glimpse under the glow of the fireworks. She had done her best to repair the effects of the damage sustained by her dress in that terrible crowd, but when she saw her deliverer appear, she blushed and an instinct of modesty led her to draw the tattered remains of her scarf over her bosom.

"Excuse me, Mademoiselle," said St. Victor with perfect ease, "for intruding upon you before you can have thoroughly recovered from your terrible fatigue. I should not have presented myself but that I was told you wished to see me."

"Yes, sir," said the young girl, in a fairly unembarrassed manner, "I wish to thank you. I know that I owe my life to your courageous devotion—"

"Oh, pray," broke in the lieutenant, "do not remind me of that odious throng which for a moment made me tremble on your account, and do not speak of gratitude when I am already repaid by being able to give free expression to my feelings towards you!"

A gesture on her part cut short a declaration which, under other circumstances, would have been better expressed. The sincere emotion under which St. Victor was labouring, paralyzed his powers of seduction.

"I hope to be able soon to prove that I appreciate the delicacy of your conduct," said the lovely girl, regaining her composure as he lost his, "but at this moment I have another favour to ask of you."

"Speak, and whatever you wish—"

"I wish to ask you to let me go. The friends who went with me to Tivoli must be in anxiety about me if they have escaped, just as I am about them." While expressing this very natural desire, the young girl looked hard at St. Victor, trying to read his intentions on his face.

"Mademoiselle," said he gently, "I was myself about to propose that you should leave this house, but you will understand that I cannot leave you alone in the streets of Paris at this hour of the night, so I must beg you to allow me to accompany you."

"Thank you, sir, but I must not presume any further on your kindness."

"Pardon me," cried St. Victor, gaily, "but I do not see that you have the power to refuse me. I hold to my rights as your deliverer; my task will not be fulfilled till I restore you to the persons for whose safety you are so anxious."

"But I am living just now, sir, at a house in the country—a long way off," murmured the young girl, evidently touched by his almost paternal tone.

"What, are you living outside Paris and fancy you can return without a protector! You can scarcely suppose I shall allow that!"

"I know you are generosity itself, and I trust you implicitly, but yet—"

"No buts, I entreat you. We shall find a good fellow in the street who

gave us a helping hand in the worst of the crush, and he will fetch us a cab."

"I remember. He freed me when I was on the point of suffocation, and helped you to hold me up."

"Just so. His appearance is not attractive, but he is as strong as a horse, and faithful as a dog, and will escort us to the end of the world, if I give him orders."

"I am ready to follow you," said the young girl resolutely, decided, no doubt, by learning that she should not have to travel perfectly alone with a stranger. St. Victor offered her his hand, into which she laid the tips of her fingers, and he led her to the outer door, without any further questions being asked, much as she would have liked to know where she was, and above all, who was the handsome woman who had nursed her so tenderly.

The foot of the staircase was soon reached, and when the lieutenant's head was thrust into the street to reconnoitre the ground, Malabry started instantly from his lurking place, and crossed the street.

"Here you come at last," said he, "I thought you were going to keep me there all night. It was not very amusing, and if I had not kept up my spirits by thrashing a man who came peering at me—"

"Do not talk so loud," said St. Victor, cutting him short, "Excuse me one moment, Mademoiselle," added he, turning towards the young girl who stood behind him, so that she had not been noticed by Malabry, "I have some orders to give this good fellow." And darting into the street, he seized the old Chouan by the arm, and dragged him a little way off.

"When will you cease to growl like an angry mastiff?" said he. "Help me to find a carriage to take this young girl home."

"What! Is she still there, and do you mean to drag her about with you?"

"I could not leave her with Fleur-de-Rose, for he is not alone."

"I know that, for I have just seen him enter his house with a dog I recognised easily as that belonging to Maneheu's wife. He sniffed at me in my corner, and would have flown at my throat if Fleur-de-Rose had not whistled him in. It was he that led the man from the Rue St. Honoré to come prying about the portico where I was waiting."

"And you thrashed this man?"

"Oh, I only gave him half-a-dozen blows of my fist and two or three kicks. He made off soon enough, I assure you."

"Yes, for some police-office! You have been thrashing one of Fouché's agents. Fleur-de-Rose recognised him as he passed. Which way did he go?"

"He ran towards the river."

"Then we will go towards St. Eustache. You must walk first and stop the first cab you see."

"Does your princess live far off?"

"Yes, in the country."

"Then it is useless trying. It is close on midnight, and a cab will never cross the barrier at such an hour."

"We must try. A gold piece works wonders."

Malabry shrugged his shoulders, but walked on in the direction of the massive building seen at the end of the street. St. Victor returned to the spot where the young girl was awaiting him with some anxiety. "Excuse me, Mademoiselle," said he, "I have given instructions to that fellow; he

will try to get us a carriage. May I venture to ask where it is to take you?"

The question seemed rather to embarrass the lady. "Never mind the distance," resumed St. Victor, "I shall not complain of it, and will induce the cabman to take us. Come with me, Mademoiselle, and do not be afraid of leaning on me, this pavement is so uneven." The young girl walked on by his side, but without availing herself of the assistance he proffered. She was evidently only partly reassured by her protector's honest manner and respectful demeanour, and if she accepted a masculine escort, it was clearly because she could scarcely help herself.

Malabry had stationed himself at the end of the street, where he was looking right and left, and keeping his ear alert for the rumbling of wheels. Just as the young couple joined him, a sound was heard in the distance, and the vehicle soon turned the corner of the Rue Montmartre. It was a large public conveyance, of a kind long since extinct, which was the precursor of our omnibus.

"Hi, driver," shouted Malabry, planting himself in the middle of the road to bar the passage, "would you like a fare to finish your day?"

The horse was longing to take breath, so it stopped short. "My day is finished," said the man, "and I would not take you a step out of my way, not for twelve francs, for Tricoteuse has several miles yet to go to her stable."

"And supposing I offered you double that sum?" said St. Victor, advancing in his turn.

"I might accept the offer, though it would be madness, for it would kill Tricoteuse, and she is worth twenty times the money." The young Chouan was just opening his lips to make the offer, when the man added: "But if you wanted to go our way, I would take you all the same."

"Which is your way?"

"I put up on the Marly Road, between Bougival and Louveciennes."

St. Victor was not well acquainted with the district, and was about to turn and consult his protégée, when she whispered:

"That is the very road which passes the house, between Rueil and Bougival."

"The very thing!" cried he. "A gold piece for you, driver, if you take us to Rueil without stopping on the way."

"To Rueil? Oh, that is another thing. Tricoteuse will have her load, since you are three, but she can always find her way home to her stable. So get up."

The offer could scarcely have been tempting to a young girl accustomed to a different style of conveyance, but she made no hesitation, and St. Victor helped her up and seated himself by her side on the back seat, while Malabry installed himself on the box. The poor mare started off at a slow measured trot, and the conveyance began to creak and sway from side to side, rolling like a vessel.

"I feel much ashamed," said St. Victor, "not to be able to convey you in some easier fashion, but as you were so anxious to proceed at once—"

"Oh, I am delighted, sir," exclaimed the young girl. "I believe I could have walked all the way rather than prolong the anxiety of my companions."

"I am glad to be able to assist you in reassuring them as to your safety, though it is an act of self-denial on my part to cut short all my hopes. Perhaps, however, you will allow me to see you again?"

"Madame Desrosiers will be delighted to receive you, if only to thank you for saving my life."

"Madame Desrosiers? Is that the lady in the yellow dress whom we lost in the crowd at Tivoli?"

"Yes."

"Is she an aunt of yours?"

"No," said the young lady, with some embarrassment, "only a friend."

"And do you live with her?" asked St. Victor, somewhat surprised.

"We live in the same house."

"Excuse my curiosity, but there is such a disparity in your age. I could only take the good lady for your aunt, there was not sufficient likeness to suppose her your mother—"

"I am an orphan, sir," said the young girl gravely, "and have no near relation except a brother, who, as we cannot be always together, has entrusted me to the care of our good friends, M. and Madame Desrosiers."

"I thought I saw M. Desrosiers also at the fête."

"He was there, and that reassures me slightly as to the fate of my friend."

"Then I may hope he will have no objection to my calling to enquire after his wife and yourself, Mademoiselle?"

"He will certainly be glad to know to whom our gratitude is due."

A question lay concealed in this evasive answer, and St. Victor felt it was time to lay aside his incognito; not that he meant to betray his real name, but he had one ready by which he had already introduced himself to the gendarme officer. "Mademoiselle," said he with superb self-possession, "you remind me that I ought to have introduced myself before requesting the favour of being allowed to see you again. My name is Charles Valréas, I am twenty-nine years of age, I have independent means, and am my own master, for I have not a single relation living."

The young lady acknowledged this declaration, which was mostly fiction, by simply inclining her head, but by the light of a lamp they were passing, St. Victor thought her face expressed satisfaction. He had hopes that his confidence might be reciprocated, but she remained silent, and he refrained from questions, feeling confident that his delicacy would be appreciated sooner or later.

Meanwhile the heavy vehicle went lumbering on its way, and had by this time reached the avenue of Neuilly. The driver, animated by the hope of his golden guerdon, was joyously whistling and encouraging his mare. "Are we still some way off?" asked Malabry, who had not opened his mouth since he took his seat on the box.

"About six miles of paved road," returned the driver. "Tricoteuse will do it in an hour and a half, or under. She is a capital animal, and was hardly more than seven when I bought her in the year II. from an aristocrat who wanted to emigrate, and was guillotined by the Committee two months after. What does that matter to me? I am an old *Sans-Culotte*, and why should I be afraid to say so, since we live now under the one undivided republic? Gee up, Tricoteuse!"

St. Victor gave Malabry a tap on the back to warn him not to continue the conversation; he felt some misgivings about this *Sans-Culotte* driver, and fancied they were shared by the young girl, whose arm quivered as it touched his. The journey, however, was accomplished without any incident; the entry of the yellow coach into the quiet village of Rueil disturbed no one but a few watch-dogs. The time to speak seemed to St. Victor to

have come at length. "If I am not mistaken," said he to the young girl in a low tone, "we must be near the country-house you mentioned."

She answered in an equally low tone, saying, as she pointed to the left side of the road: "Here it is, sir."

"What! That high wall—"

"Is the park wall."

"And the large gate I see yonder—"

"Is the main entrance, but I do not wish to alight there," said the young girl with some embarrassment.

"Your wishes are orders."

"At this time of night, and in this conveyance, I should be afraid—"

"Of the remarks that might be passed by the lodge-keeper. I can quite understand that. Will you tell me where you wish to be set down?"

"Further on, at the end of the wall, there is a little door to which I have a key."

"Very well. Point it out as we pass, and I will stop the driver about a hundred feet beyond. He had better not know where you reside."

"I am much obliged to you."

The springs of the vehicle were creaking so loudly on this badly kept road that not a word of this brief conversation was overheard by the driver. St. Victor gazed on the interminable wall, handsome gateway, and majestic trees of this park, and felt surprised to find that Madame Desrosiers and her young friend belonged to such a grand place. Still he could not guess to what rung of the social ladder they belonged, for this princely park did not seem altogether to harmonise with the yellow gown of the stout dame who had attracted Tamerlane's admiration. He was certainly but ill-acquainted with the environs of Paris, and the aspect of this magnificent mansion had no associations for him; the driver, however, pointed his whip at it, and said suddenly: "That place ought to be burnt down!"

"You seem to dislike the citizen who occupies it," rejoined Malabry.

"Ah, don't I rather? A rascally aristocrat who has only served the Republic in order to twist its neck! Sometimes, I can tell you, when I drive by and see him over the wall, with that pasty face of his, pacing up and down with his hands behind his back, I could send a bullet through him!"

The young girl started, and St. Victor, noticing this, said to himself: "She seems to take a great interest in the owner of the mansion. It cannot be Desrosiers that excites this fellow's wrath! Who in the world can it be?"

"What is the name of this brave aristocrat?" asked Malabry, feeling attracted towards the man who wished to wring the neck of the Republic.

"Why, don't you know? Bonaparte to be sure! The First Consul, as he has the impudence to call himself."

"Indeed! Is that where he lives?"

"Oh, not all the year round. He has pleasant times of it, spending the winter at the Tuileries, and the summer here or at St. Cloud. Just as things were in the days of that tyrant Capet, and to think that the poor nation has to pay for it all!"

"The fact is, it was not worth while to change rulers," said St. Victor, who felt much interested by this dialogue. "So then this handsome place is Malmaison, I suppose?"

"Where can you come from not to know that? And yet you say you live near here!"

"Drive on, and don't pester me with questions if you mean to earn that

gold piece," said the lieutenant in a tone which would brook no reply. The driver began to expend his vexation on poor Tricotouse, and St. Victor to muse on the apparent complications of this adventure, when the young girl said in a low voice: "This is the little door."

Her protector made a sign to show he had not forgotten their arrangement, and five minutes after he shouted to the driver: "Stop, we will get out here."

"What! here, on the highway, where there is not a house within a mile?"

"Pull up, and mind your own business."

This time the man obeyed, and even jumped down from his seat, probably because he was afraid of losing his money. Malabry had alighted just as promptly, and St. Victor, who followed, offered his hand to the fair stranger.

"Take your louis," said he to the driver, "and now return to your seat and drive on."

The man pocketed the money and drove on, whistling a revolutionary air. But when he had gone fifty paces, he stood up and shouted from behind the hood of his lumbering conveyance: "Get along with you for a pack of aristocrats! Enter the precincts of the usurper! All Bougival shall know by to-morrow how the friends of Bonaparte's wife run about the roads by night with young dandies!"

"Let me catch him and duck him in the stream," said Malabry. "The water is so handy there—"

"I entreat you, sir," murmured the young girl.

"You are right," rejoined the lieutenant, "the fellow is not worth chastising. Come, Mademoiselle, and you," said he, addressing Malabry, "remain here, and fall on the man if he should venture to retrace his steps to act the spy!"

Both the lady and her protector felt that the decisive moment had come, which would settle whether their transient connection were to have any further results; neither felt a wish to terminate it, though St. Victor was naturally the first to give expression to a desire shared by his companion. "Mademoiselle," asked he, respectfully, "now that you know me a little better, may I hope for permission to see you again?"

"Sir," replied she, in a tremulous voice, "I can scarcely refuse it, and I owe you too much not to tell you the truth. You are aware that I am an orphan, and have no home where I can receive you but the house of Madame Desrosiers, who is lady-in-waiting to the wife of the First Consul."

"Lady-in-waiting!" repeated St. Victor, quite taken aback.

"Yes, and I myself occupy the position of reader to Madame Josephine Bonaparte."

"Has Madame Bonaparte a reader?" exclaimed the young man, still more stupefied.

"If you choose to come to Malmaison, Madame Desrosiers will be much gratified by a call, and I—shall be very glad."

They had now reached the little door, and the young lady, taking a key from her pocket, opened it, and had stepped inside before the lieutenant had recovered from his surprise. "Good-bye for the present, sir," said she, as she closed the door. St. Victor darted forward, but fell against the wood-work, while at the same time his hands chanced on the key which the fugitive had forgotten to remove from the lock. His first impulse was to profit by this possibly intentional oversight, and to follow, yet he felt it would be abominable to abuse her confidence, and nothing would have

induced him at that moment to act against his scruples. There was certainly nothing tempting in the idea of setting foot within the demesne of the First Consul, and he felt somewhat disconcerted at the idea of his fair charmer being reader to Madame Bonaparte.

While pondering the method by which he might reconcile passion and politics, he removed the key from the lock to his pocket. At the same moment, Malabry, who thought his task completed when the vehicle turned the corner, came up and joined his officer.

"Well?" asked he, with a significant gesture.

"Well, she has returned home through this door," replied St. Victor.

"And you have not followed her? I congratulate you on your wisdom."

"Did you think I should venture by myself into the park of Malmaison?"

"Oh, then that *Sans-Culotte* was speaking the truth, was he? Does the lady we have been attending for the last four or five hours form part of the General's court, for it seems this Republican General has a court?"

"Certainly, and I count on your assistance to enable me to see her again. I have no intention of seeking the society of the First Consul, but since I have here the key of this secret entrance, I mean to use it."

"You will be arrested. The grounds must be full of gendarmes and private police, who will lay hands on you before you catch a glimpse of your lady."

"Don't be alarmed. Bonaparte is not so closely guarded as you fancy, for he never suspects that George is in Paris, nor do I mean to walk about the lawn. There is a great wood above, where I imagine the ladies of the mansion often take an airing in the evening, and it will be easy enough to hide myself there. Besides, you will help me."

"Never, merely to court a girl. If I knew that I was likely to come across Bonaparte at the turn of some path and might strangle him, as Cadoudal ought to have done at the Tuileries, the case might be different."

"Ah, you suggest an idea! I would rather make an open attack upon Bonaparte, but one never knows how things will turn out, so it might be as well for you to know the inside of this place."

"I have not the General's orders, and will promise nothing."

"Very well, but I know you will come with me to-morrow, for you will never desert the friend who twice delivered you from the hands of the enemy."

"I have not forgotten, and I will come," growled Malabry, who always yielded in the end to the wishes of his young comrade.

"Then let us be off now. That rascally driver must not find us here, if he comes prowling about with a few neighbours of the same kidney."

The night was advancing, and though Malabry walked along the deserted highway at a good pace, St. Victor's dainty boots were soon cut to pieces by the sharp stones, and he had hard work to follow, till, at last, he was forced to sit down by the roadside.

"We cannot be far from the Seine," said Malabry, "and if we take that path, I fancy it will soon bring us to the Bridge of Neuilly, where we may by chance find a cab." Following the turn he had suggested, the pair soon came to a hill which they descended through vineyards, and at a bend, came suddenly upon a solitary house. It was closed, but a signboard swung above the door, and a feeble ray of light gleamed through one of the windows on the first floor.

"Well," cried St. Victor, "since fate has led us to an inn, I would just

as soon sleep and eat here, and enter Paris in full daylight, as pass the barriers at daybreak in evening dress."

"Don't you fancy the innkeeper will stare just as much to see you in it now?"

"Oh, I can throw gold dust in his eyes."

"Do as you please, but remember, if any harm comes of it, it is not my fault." So saying, Malabry began to pummel the door with his fist. No response came at first, but the lighted window opened gently, and St. Victor, who happened to raise his head at the moment, fancied he saw the barrel of a musket gleaming through the half-open shutters.

"Who is there, and what is wanted?" cried a voice from above.

"We have lost our way in returning from the fête at Nanterre, and want to rest here awhile and have a mouthful to eat. Do not fear, we will pay handsomely."

No reply came at first, the man turning away from the window as if to consult some other person, whom the two Chonans could not see. Then the voice cried: "Very well. Stay there, and I will open the door."

"Thank you," said St. Victor, adding under his breath to Malabry, "Did you see his gun?"

"No, but it is not surprising to find the inhabitants of such a solitary place as this on their guard in such times. Fortunately, I have my pistols."

"Very well," said St. Victor. "By way of precaution, we had better place ourselves on either side of the door, so as to avoid a shot, and oblige the innkeeper to show himself." He was still speaking, when the door opened gently. The barrel of the gun appeared first, then the aperture became wider, and disclosed a man who cautiously showed his head first, and then his body, but the light having been left upstairs, only a dark form was visible.

"Come in, citizens," said a voice which St. Victor fancied he recognised.

"Here we are, landlord," said he, approaching the door. An exclamation of surprise greeted him; the recognition was apparently mutual.

"Why, if it is not the man belonging to the cable," said Malabry, who, among other gifts, possessed the feline power of descrying objects in the dark.

"What, M. de St. Victor, is it you?" returned the landlord.

"Pierre Maneheu!" rejoined the young man, astonished. "What in the world are you doing here?"

"If you want to know, step in and let me close the door. It is not advisable to talk in the open air in these parts."

"By Jove," said St. Victor, as the farmer shot the bolts, "this is a day for meetings, the husband now, and last night—" He stopped suddenly, conscious that he was on the verge of saying something foolish, but Maneheu had a quick ear and his mind was alert.

"Have you seen my wife?" asked he promptly.

"I, where in the world should I see her?" returned St. Victor, coolly, not choosing to betray his friend Liardot's secrets.

Maneheu might possibly have insisted, had not a voice called out from above: "Who is there, Pierre?" There was no hesitation this time on the part of the Chouans, for it was impossible to mistake the deep sonorous tones.

"The General!" murmured Malabry.

"George!" exclaimed St. Victor.

"He is there, you can go up," said Maneheu. They rushed up, and found Cadoudal standing behind a table, on which was a lamp, holding a pistol in each hand.

"My General!" cried St. Victor, tossing up his cap.

"You here, my son?" replied Cadoudal, laying down his pistols and opening his arms, "but who is that with you?"

"Burban, General."

"What, Burban who saved my life at Biville, when I hung from that rope! Come forward, my brave fellow. And now, tell me what strange chance has brought you to the door of this tavern."

"Business, General," replied St. Victor, promptly. "We have been inspecting the surroundings of Malmaison. I wished to know how Bonaparte was lodged."

"So that idea occurred to you, did it?" said George, smiling as a parent might on a child who has just given some proof of intelligence.

"Yes, I thought that some day or other we might have to meet this famous First Consul, and I wished to know my way in without having to ask the lodge-keeper!"

"And have you learned what you wanted?"

"Yes, certainly. You see, General, I had been spending the evening at a fête at Nanterre, which explains my being dressed as I am, and towards midnight, I walked on to Rueil, Malabry accompanying me. All the villagers were in bed, so we could walk round the park as we liked, and besides, I discovered a private door in the wall, through which we can make our way in when we like, with the help of a false key. Bonaparte often walks alone in the more retired parts of his demesne, so we have him at our mercy. You see, General, we had done a little work, and earned our rest at the first tavern on our way till daylight should appear."

This story was related all in a breath, and if it contained more lies than truth, it was destined for Malabry's instruction, lest he should make Cadoudal acquainted with certain circumstances which St. Victor preferred to pass over in silence.

"Very well, my son," said George, "and now be seated, as well as Burban and Maneheu, to whose ingenuity and devotion I owe my presence here. Since chance has brought us together, let us discuss our enterprise. How long have you been in Paris?"

"Five or six days."

"Have you seen any of our friends?"

"Yes, beside Malabry and Tamerlane, who travelled up from Biville with me, I have seen Liardot."

"And what did he tell you?"

"That he was still on the best of terms with Fouché, and should have some information to give you to-night, on the Cours-la-Reine, where he should be waiting for you at the appointed hour."

"Then everything passed off well in Normandy, after we parted?"

"Yes. Our men returned without any accident happening, and the gendarmes do not suspect you of having disembarked; only they set fire to Bois-Guillaume, Liardot told me."

"Do you hear, Pierre?" said Cadoudal, turning to Maneheu.

"Yes, General," said the latter coldly. "They have taken away my wife, so they might well burn down my farm."

"The king will make your losses good, and you will find your wife again."

Maneheu shook his head, as if he did not find much consolation in this promise, and St. Victor, who was observing him, saw a fierce gleam in his eye.

"And so," resumed George, addressing his lieutenant, "you found the means of entering the park of Malmaison, and henceforth, we have it in our power to attack the usurper."

"Yes, General. I am certain that nothing could be easier. Bonaparte is careless about protecting himself when at home, and it would be possible almost any day to enter through that little door and stab him without being discovered."

"And I suppose you think we should take advantage of his negligence to surprise him and kill him?"

"General," said St. Victor with some hesitation, "you are putting a delicate question, and I must give a frank reply. The interests of the kingdom call for Bonaparte's removal, and I am ready enough to attack him openly, but I will not undertake an assassination."

"You have divined my meaning," said Cadoudal gravely, "and I am glad of it. Now listen with attention, for it is time you should know what I have resolved to do, in order to get rid of the intruder who keeps the king of France from his lawful throne. You tell me that Bonaparte takes no precautions for his personal safety when at Malmaison. I know it, and that is my reason for not wishing to strike him there. It would be an assassination, and the man would become a martyr in the eyes of Europe, since his victories have already crowned him with a halo of glory."

"Quite true," murmured the young Chouan, "and yet he must die, for he aspires to the throne."

"He must die, but in a different way, if his death is to advance our cause. And I may own to you that the idea of again having recourse to that *infernal machine* is repugnant to me, who have always fought His Majesty's enemies on the open battlefield."

"So it is to me," exclaimed St. Victor.

"What matters how vermin dies, so long as it is killed!" said Malabry, for whom these distinctions were too subtle.

"Silence," said Cadoudal, "this man is a lion, and not to be crushed under foot like vermin. On the day when he offered me money and honours if I would serve in his army, I rejected his insulting propositions, as you know, but I became acquainted with the man, and vowed only to meet him by open force."

"More's the pity! For we may never have the opportunity."

"I know it. I dreamed of our meeting face to face on one of our Breton moors, but he has always disdained to fight against us himself, and now Brittany is pacified and the Chouans gone. Bonaparte will doubtless make war on the Austrians or Russians, but I am tired of foreign service, and besides, where cannon decide the victory, what can a handful of men do against a military commander? I have had to find some other way."

"What is that?" asked St. Victor, more and more surprised.

"I have resolved to attack him in the open country and surrounded by his escort, on equal terms."

"How, when, and where?"

"Two hundred paces from here, on the Rueil road, on his way to Malmaison. I shall charge the consular guard which escorts him always."

"I begin to see now how we come to find you here."

"I have obtained full information. The escort consists of about twenty

mounted soldiers. We shall be only eighteen ; I generally leave the *blues* the advantage of numbers. Liardot is to let me know the day and hour ; there will be many opportunities in the course of the autumn, for Bonaparte is fond of Malmaison, and sleeps there at least two nights a week. They say he spends his evenings in listening to the chimes at Rueil, like the true Italian he is."

"Still I do not see where we are to conceal ourselves on this road, which is as level as the shore near Mont-St-Michel."

"In a deserted quarry close at hand, which is not more than two hundred yards from the Rueil road, wide enough to hold a squadron, and protected by a hillock from which our look-out men can signal to us the approach of the escort."

"And where are we to find horses ?"

"In this house, which Maneheu has just purchased from a poor innkeeper who had been ruined by the Revolution. You know we have plenty of funds ; within another week the new landlord will have two dozen excellent horses in his stables, destined apparently for hire by Parisians, who come out here on Sundays to indulge their taste for riding. Pierre Maneheu will have three stable-men to look after them whom you knew well in the Morbihan army, and they will not only attend to our horses, but to the arms which Pierre will store for us in his cellar."

"Your plan is admirable, General," cried St. Victor. "It will be like the challenge of the Thirty, by which your ancestors, the Bretons, exterminated the English."

"I have no ancestors," said Cadoudal smiling, "for my father was a miller. We shall be obliged to form an ambuscade, but then Bonaparte has laid more than one for the Austrians. I have only eighteen men, certainly, while he had forty thousand, but what difference does that make ?"

George seemed to wax warmer as he spoke, and St. Victor, who was watching him, understood that he was trying to delude himself as to the true nature of his project.

"I have only to give you instructions for meeting on the 8th of September," resumed the Chouan leader, "for we shall not see each other again till the day for action arrives. After that date, you must all repair each morning, just before noon, to the gardens of the Palais-Royal, but each separately, and no recognitions must be exchanged. Until one o'clock, you will walk about under the trees, like worthy citizens taking an airing after reading the papers. At one o'clock, you will leave the place, one by one, unless you see Pierre Maneheu appear. If he shows himself in the walk skirting the Galerie de Valois, direct your steps instantly to this inn, where you will find me waiting and everything ready. Do you understand ?"

"Perfectly, General," said the two Chouans together.

"And have you any remark to make, St. Victor ?"

"None, except that I wish the attack were to be made to-morrow. And then, have you provided for what is to happen in France, and especially in Paris, when we have made an end of Bonaparte ?"

"What a boy you are ! Do you imagine I mean to hand over our unhappy country to the Revolutionary party ? I have arranged everything. When Bonaparte is dead, we shall need a man at the head of affairs for a time to prevent disorder and prepare the country to receive its king again."

"A military leader will be the only man who can do that."

"You are right. And he must be one who has already distinguished himself sufficiently to carry the army with him."

"Certainly. But where is the man to be found?"

"He is found. I have found two indeed, and can take my choice. The one is Moreau, the victor at Hohenlinden, the other Pichegru, the conqueror of Holland. The latter is already one of us; he has seen the princes in London, and is to land in Normandy presently. Moreau detests Bonaparte as his military rival, and is quite ready to favour the Restoration in order to pull him down from his pedestal. What do you say now?"

"That if Louis XVIII. does not make you a duke and marshal of France, there is no gratitude in kings."

"When the king is seated on his throne, I shall retire to my modest patrimony and leave courtiers to ask for places and titles," said Cadoudal quietly. "And now," added he, holding out a hand to either comrade, "go with Pierre to get some refreshment, and leave me to rest a little, for I was about to throw myself on the bed when you knocked, and for the last three nights I have not had two hours' sleep."

St. Victor and Malabry followed Maneheu, who served them with a frugal supper, and then showed them the way to Neuilly. The sun was rising as they parted company on re-entering Paris.

V.

THE month of September is certainly the pleasantest season of the year in the north of France, and on one of its early evenings, on the day following the unlucky fête at Tivoli, the two women who had been rescued by the Chouans were walking side by side in one of the shaded walks in the Malmaison grounds. Tamerlane's skill and devotion had enabled him to save his Juno, not by strength of arm, as St. Victor had done his divinity, but by taking refuge with her in an artificial cavern, dignified by the name of Calypso's grotto. There M. Desrosiers had with difficulty joined them, and his presence had restrained Tamerlane from expressing his admiration either in prose or verse. As soon as the danger was over, they had parted, promising to exchange calls, though the Chouan, for his part, had little intention of keeping the promise, since Desrosiers had boasted in his presence of his wife's connection and his own, with the household of the First Consul. Tamerlane's admiration was not likely to make him compromise his own safety nor the interests of his own party, so he gave a false address, and parted reluctantly from the stout dame.

"Do you know, my dear Gabrielle, we have become the actual heroines of a romance?" said Madame Desrosiers, as they paced the walk together.

"Oh, I don't feel in the least like it," returned the young girl, gaily; "I am sure you are far better adapted for the part."

"Oh, what are you thinking of, my dear! That tall young man was very good-looking certainly, but I can never forget my duty to Adolphe."

"Who is Adolphe?"

"Are you not aware of M. Desrosiers' christian name!"

"I beg your pardon, I had quite forgotten it," said Gabrielle, trying to preserve her gravity.

"But you, my dear, are perfectly unfettered," resumed the lady, "and if the gentleman who saved you is a good match, as I strongly suspect, I see nothing to prevent your marrying him."

The young girl coloured and she stammered : " We never spoke about anything of the sort."

" It is a pity then that you did not. He is a handsome fellow, and, by his dress, I should suppose he is rich. Between ourselves, you might do worse. I imagine he would not take leave of you without asking if he might not see you again."

" Yes, he asked me, and—I said he might call on you. I thought—"

" You did quite right, and I shall be delighted to receive him. By-the-by, what is his name?"

" He told me it was Charles Valréas."

" Valréas ! I like the name. I wish I knew that of his friend who protected me, but I did not venture to ask, and Adolphe never thinks of anything. Only fancy, he had not even the grace to ask the poor fellow to call, but fortunately I shall soon be able to repair the omission by asking M. Valréas to bring his friend with him. Of course as soon as he comes, I shall send for you, but—for it is as well to be prepared—supposing the young man were to confide in me at once, what must I say on your behalf?"

" Madame," said Gabrielle with some emotion, " I shall never marry without my brother's consent. You know that he is the only relative I have in the world, and that he has always stood to me in the place of a father."

" Just so. He will easily give his consent, for he is very fond of you and loves to gratify all your wishes. Besides, what reason could he have for rejecting a young, handsome, wealthy—why, if there is not some one beckoning to me from the house," said Madame Desrosiers suddenly, " I was forgetting the time ; the First-Consul will be here from Paris soon, and Madame Bonaparte must be in a hurry to dress. Are you coming in too, Gabrielle?"

" I do not think I shall be wanted at present, and I would rather stay out to enjoy a little more of this charming evening."

Gabrielle was not sorry to be left with her own thoughts, which had dwelt incessantly on her deliverer since they parted, and she had no regret in parting with the stout lady through whom she had made his acquaintance, since she had consented to go and see the fireworks merely in order to oblige her.

The air was warm, and the sweet evening seemed to favour the young girl's dreams, as she wandered on under the shade of the lofty oaks. At the end of the avenue, there was a kind of bowling-green surrounded by thick alleys of hornbeam, and there, concealed by a thick screen of foliage, lay Gabrielle's favourite retreat. She directed her steps to her usual seat, and soon became lost to everything but her reminiscences of that terrible night. Again there rose before her eyes the surging crowd, the sinister lights, and, in the midst of the awful tumult, the proud and handsome countenance of her protector. " Charles," murmured she ; " his name was Charles." She mused again, but her lips soon opened, and there fell from them in low tones, " I love him."

A rustling in the branches made her start and raise her head. The man she had just named stood before her, and in another second he was kneeling at her feet."

" You love me !" cried he.

" Oh, sir !" said the young girl in an imploring voice.

" Oh, do not deny the sweet words you have just spoken, nor regret them, for I love and adore you !"

"Pray rise."

"Not till you forgive me for venturing to surprise you thus," cried St. Victor, taking her hands and covering them with kisses.

Gabrielle rose in alarm. "Sir," said she, in a tone of some firmness, "I cannot forgive you unless you do what I ask you." St. Victor obeyed, and when the young girl saw him standing before her, looking so proud, handsome, and excited, she felt afraid of losing her self-control, and turned to leave the bower.

"You are going!" exclaimed the lieutenant, "and I shall never see you again. Very well then, all I have to do is to go and get killed somewhere." This was said with such an air of decision, as he parted the boughs of the grove, that Gabrielle paused, and rejoined with an emotion she vainly sought to conceal:

"You mistake me, sir; I besought you to put an end to this interview, but I have not forbidden you to see me again. I thought I had even suggested how—"

"Oh, I know your friend—"

"She was here just now and assured me she would be glad to welcome you, so to-morrow if you choose—"

"And am I never to see you or speak to you except in the presence of a stranger? No, I would rather die."

"Die?" repeated Gabrielle, coming nearer to St. Victor, and then, checking herself, she rejoined with some effort: "I do not know why you should talk of dying—I am a poor orphan and know nothing of life—but I think if we love, it should be in earnest, and—if ever I love—"

"Go on, Mademoiselle!"

"I should ask the man I chose to devote his life to me, as I should devote mine to him."

"Can you have the slightest doubt as to my intentions? Will you not believe that I am ready to sacrifice everything to you?"

"You almost compel me to doubt it by refusing to make acquaintance with the only family where you can meet me and my brother."

"Your brother! I was not aware of his being here."

"It is on him, and on him alone, that my future depends, for I shall never marry contrary to his wishes." St. Victor started, and his blue eyes flashed, but his head drooped and he made no reply.

"Farewell, sir," said the young lady, wounded by a silence which she interpreted as betraying the true intentions of the man whose wife she had been willing to become.

He looked up instantly, and said with an ardent sincerity which there was no mistaking: "I entreat you to give me a hearing, and if I fail in convincing you, we part for ever. Heaven is my witness that there is nothing in the world I long for so much as to see you again, but under the conditions you name, this happiness is denied me."

"How so?"

"You force me to confess what I wished to conceal from you. I left France at the commencement of the Revolution, and my name still figures on the list of those outlawed. If I ventured to set foot again last year on French soil, it was as an outlaw, and if a court-martial were to prove my identity, I should be shot on the spot."

"Are you one of the outlawed?" exclaimed Gabrielle piteously, "when I thought—"

"That I was one of Fortune's favourites, no doubt," suggested St. Victor,

"one of the *bourgeois* who have never had to pay the penalty of caste. I pass under the name of the citizen Charles Valréas, but I am of noble birth and love my country, though she repudiates me. You see me at large because I am unknown or forgotten, but I can never reckon on what a day may have in store for me, and so, if I were to ask for your hand, I should be guilty of the meanest conduct."

In speaking thus, St. Victor was telling the truth, but not the whole truth. His name did indeed figure on the fatal list, and exposed him to the risk of summary execution, since the decrees of the Convention had not been abrogated, though they were more rarely put into operation. Still, he said nothing of his real name or his connection with Cadoudal, nor would he have been justified in betraying to a woman secrets which concerned others beside himself. Thus he found himself compelled to deceive the woman he loved so ardently, under an inexorable necessity imposed on conspirators of every age, as though Providence would punish them for rebelling, even in a righteous cause, against the established government of their country.

On hearing this confession, Gabrielle had shuddered with fear and trembled for joy. "I thank you for your frankness," said she in a voice tremulous with emotion, "I can no longer insist on your presenting yourself to Madame Desrosiers, but—may I ask you a question?"

"By all means."

"Though this odious law is not repealed, I believe it is not difficult to get names erased from the list. Only the other day, Madame Bonaparte pleaded the cause of two noblemen successfully with the First Consul."

St. Victor had some difficulty in restraining his feelings when he heard the young girl propose to petition on his behalf the man he had resolved to exterminate, still he managed to rejoin:

"I am aware that General Bonaparte is less rigorous than those who preceded him in power. But before such favours can be granted, long formalities have to be gone through. Will you condemn me to refrain from seeing you till all this is accomplished?"

"I shall be sorry to do so," said Gabrielle, blushing. "But what can I do? Where can we meet without your incurring dangers which I feel confident will soon be removed?"

"Why cannot we meet again here, when the park is quiet by night?"

"Come here to meet you by night? Never!"

"Mademoiselle," said St. Victor sadly, "I expected you to refuse, and I can understand why. You know too little of me to trust me, or believe that I am an honest man, incapable of abusing your confidence. I do not complain. You yourself, however, admit that it will not do for me to call on Madame Desrosiers, so I can but withdraw from these grounds, where I had no right to enter without your permission. Allow me, however, to hand you the key which you left last night in the little door, and which has given me access to this park. I am anxious you should no longer consider me capable of taking advantage of a woman's folly or weakness."

Gabrielle turned pale as she stretched out a trembling hand to receive the key, but it fell to her side as she strove with the other to repress the throbbings of her heart.

"Sir," said she, in so low a tone that St. Victor could scarcely catch her words, "you have saved my life, and I cannot believe you would be guilty of anything base. Promise me not to oppose any steps that may be taken to get your name erased, and—keep this key. At midnight to-morrow,

at this same spot, I will come and tell you whether we may hope for a favourable result."

"I thank you for having faith in me, and promise never to abuse your confidence, for I love you enough to make you my wife."

"You make me feel very happy," murmured the young girl, quite overcome by her feelings, "and I hope the time for probation will not last too long. I will speak to Madame Bonaparte this evening, she has great influence with the First Consul, and I shall also ask my brother to plead for you."

"Is your brother also attached to the General's household?"

"No, but he has served under him several years and often sees him, for his battalion is quartered in Paris. My brother is Major Robert of the picked gendarmerie."

"Robert? Do you say his name is Robert?" exclaimed St. Victor.

"That is his name, and mine," said the young girl gently. "Can you have heard it before?"

"No, Mademoiselle, for I know no one now in France, but it was the name of one of my early friends who died abroad."

The trouble it gave St. Victor to invent this fib on the spot, betrayed his perturbation on discovering so unexpectedly that the charming creature with whom he had fallen so deeply in love was the sister of that very officer whom he had reason to regard as his mortal enemy. "Mademoiselle," said he hastily, "I cannot find words to express what I feel, and will now retire, merely reminding you of your promise—at midnight to-morrow, I shall be awaiting you under these trees."

"You have my promise and I will come," murmured Gabrielle, "and yet—I am afraid I shall be doing wrong."

"I hoped that you had ceased to doubt me."

"If I had any doubts, do you think I would have promised? I have no fears of you, and feel sure that I shall have no need to blush when I tell my brother all, as I hope to do some day soon. If you only knew how good he is, and besides, he has peculiar views as to marriage, which will prevent him from refusing his consent," added Gabrielle, smiling. "How often I have heard him talk against beautiful young girls who marry old generals simply from motives of ambition! How often he has said, 'Dear sister, you must choose a husband for yourself, for I have neither time nor opportunity to find one for you.'"

St. Victor had his own reasons for mistrusting this accommodating brother, but he resumed the conversation by saying: "May I ask whether patrols walk the park during the night?"

"The First Consul will not have anything of the sort at Malmaison, and there are no soldiers here but those who form the body-guard at the main entrance. The watchmen go their rounds at night, I believe, but there are only three of them, and they take it by turns."

"I shall contrive to avoid them," murmured the lieutenant, "and I can easily hide if I catch sight of them. And now farewell for the present, Mademoiselle," said, he in a voice which he tried vainly to steady. Gabrielle could not speak, she held out her hand; he kissed it respectfully, and vanished behind the trees.

On leaving the park, he crossed the road and soon reached the deserted banks of the Seine, where he sat down and began to ponder this strange situation. He was conscious that the marriage of which they had dreamed was almost impossible, and that it would be wiser to relinquish interviews

which could lead to no happy result. Yet his love for the Major's sister was sincere and ardent, and he would rather have risked his life a hundred times than abandon the hope of meeting her again.

For an instant, he actually thought of going and confessing all to George, and asking to be absolved from his oath, but he felt at once that a step of this kind, taken on the eve of a decisive action, would look like cowardice, and that, having once pledged himself to the conspiracy, he was bound to sacrifice everything to it. He had to content himself by arguing that, when the First Consul was removed from the stage and the king restored, he himself should be in a position to forgive and protect Robert and ask him for his sister's hand. Buoyed up by these chimerical hopes, he was about to sink into a lover's day-dream, when Malabry, whom he had not heard approach, clapped him on the back, saying: "I have been round the park, and know every turning and winding of it now."

"How did you get out?" asked St. Victor, who had not expected his comrade so soon.

"Why, by the same way I entered, to be sure! At one of the corners up there, the wall is so low that I could easily climb it; when once I got in, I went all round the wood, and now I could find my way if my eyes were bandaged."

"Then you would not lose yourself in the dark?"

"No indeed, and if there were ten patrols, I defy them to take me, for I have discovered a sort of cave, the entrance to which is overgrown by brushwood; that would serve as a retreat if they were to give me the chase, to say nothing of my being able to stow away arms or disguises in it."

"Well, Malabry, I shall want you to-morrow night to mount guard over a bowling-green where I have a rendezvous at midnight."

"At the end of the wide avenue leading to the lawn in front of the house?"

"Just so. I shall want you to mount guard at a little distance, and as soon as you see any one approaching, to warn me by hooting like an owl."

"That is easily done. But that will not prevent the patrol from advancing and laying hands on your princess, if not on you. Perhaps you will say I might wring the patrol's neck."

"No indeed. I beg you not to use your hands or knife, except in case of extremity or at peril of your life."

"Oh, with such orders as those, I can answer for nothing. Unless, indeed—ah, and why not?" muttered Malabry to himself.

"I am waiting till it shall please you to make me acquainted with the new plan you seem to be devising," said St. Victor, drily.

"Well then, look here. I undertake to keep any one from approaching the spot you mention without using weapons or even my fists, but it must be on condition you let me take my own way and ask no questions. Will you trust me or not?"

"Oh, certainly, but—" St. Victor reflected an instant, and remembered that Malabry was reliable and fertile in inventions, though obstinate as a mule.

"I will accept your conditions," said he.

"Then let us take the first vehicle that passes and make our way back to Paris," returned Malabry, "for I shall not have more time than I want to prepare for to-morrow night."

VI.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since Gabrielle Robert had held that first interview in the grounds of Malmaison which was to prove such an epoch in her life. She had met St. Victor again the following night, and in each succeeding interview he had proved himself the most tender and passionate, but at the same time the most respectful of suitors; their long conversations might indeed have taken place in a corner of the drawing-room at Malmaison, in an interval between the dances, and in the presence of a hundred spectators. It was excusable indeed on Gabrielle's part to believe in a happy solution of this dubious situation, for in her eyes, the presence of Charles Valréas' name on the list of proscriptions was the only obstacle to their union, and she felt no doubt as to being able to effect its removal. St. Victor, however, could scarcely flatter himself with such illusions, knowing, as he did, that his life and liberty hung on a thread, and that he had unconsciously laid himself at the enemy's mercy by making himself known to the sister under the same name as he had assumed when travelling with the officer. This had of course been done before he was aware of their relationship, and he had intended to remedy the mistake by assuming another false name, but at their second interview, Gabrielle informed him that the Major had suddenly left on a secret mission without having time to bid her good-bye, and that he would be absent some weeks.

She deplored the delay which prevented her telling her story to her brother and asking his assistance, but St. Victor congratulated himself, flattering himself that, before the brother's return, they should have got rid of Bonaparte, and the royalist cause would be triumphant, which would smooth many obstacles. Everything combined to keep the lovers in a state of false security. Their delightful interviews had never yet been interrupted by an intruder, though the rounds were made as usual; two or three times, certainly, they had been warned by the hoot of an owl of approaching footsteps, but no one had appeared. St. Victor had scaled the wall, and Gabrielle had concealed herself behind a bush, though she knew nothing of where the signal came from, Charles Valréas merely telling her that a friend was keeping watch for them.

That was indeed all he knew himself; for the last week the Chouans had been meeting each morning, according to Cadoudal's orders, in the gardens of the Palais-Royal, though without seeing Pierre Maneheu, and when St. Victor wanted Malabry, he had only to say in a whisper, as he passed him without recognition, "I depend on you for to-night." No inquiries were ever made as to the means employed for keeping the bowling green private, as they returned to Paris together by the St. Germain boat.

Both men kept thinking that these expeditions must soon come to an end, as they were daily expecting to be summoned for the attack on the First Consul, just as Gabrielle was looking forward to meeting her brother. One evening at the commencement of the third week in September, she was present at a reception held by Madame Desrosiers, who occupied a handsome suite of rooms on one of the upper floors of the mansion, and was full of social ambitions.

Gabrielle was not always at her friend's parties, for Madame Bonaparte was very fond of her, and the young lady naturally preferred her society to that of the steward's wife. But on this occasion Josephine had been de-

tained in Paris by an official reception, and Mademoiselle Robert chose to spend her evening in the Desrosiers' apartments, rather than be all alone, especially as she was anxious to show herself in the household before retiring to the west wing, whence a private staircase led down into the garden where she was to meet Charles Valréas at midnight. Gabrielle was usually felt on these occasions to be somewhat above the rest of the company, and she made no effort to shine; on that evening, in particular, she manifested little interest in the conversation, occupying herself mainly with her embroidery. M. Desrosiers recounted for the tenth time at least the strange sight he had seen on the 10th of August, when a tiny steam boat with paddle-wheels first appeared on the Seine, but Gabrielle still continued silent and absent.

"Adolphe," exclaimed Madame Desrosiers, "never mind that boat, but come and tell us about the frightful things to be seen here."

"What things?" asked the three ladies present.

"What," said the steward's wife, lowering her voice, "have not you heard of the Black Leg?"

"The Black Leg!" repeated the chorus. "What in the world is that?"

"I cannot really tell you," replied Madame Desrosiers, "for no one yet knows; but one thing is certain, no one has ever seen anything more hideous. Ask Adolphe about it."

"Me, my dear!" exclaimed the steward, "I have not seen it, nor have I the slightest wish."

"Oh, pray tell us the whole story," chimed in all the ladies.

"Do you really want to hear it? Then be prepared to shudder."

"We are shuddering already in anticipation," said Gabrielle, smiling, and beginning to pay more attention to the conversation.

"And there is reason, I assure you. You must know that the Black Leg is a phantom, a terrible spectre."

"Oh dear! And what does the spectre look like?"

"Like a leg," said Madame Desrosiers, lowering her voice, "a monstrosity of course, quite black, and as hairy as a bearskin."

"And has this leg any head or face?" asked a colonel's widow, who was of an incredulous nature.

"An enormous head and hideous face, covered with black crape."

"It gives me a chill down the back," murmured M. Desrosiers.

"A strange phantom! It sounds more like a masquerade," resumed the incredulous widow.

"A masquerade, indeed!" said the hostess, indignantly; "ask Landouiller what he thinks of it."

"Oh, has he seen it? What happened?"

"I must tell you first that the phantom has been seen several times, and the other watchmen were all so frightened that they took to their heels. But Landouiller is an old soldier, and he came across it on Tuesday night as he was going his rounds."

"And where was this spectre?"

"At the entrance to the avenue leading to the lawn. It was moonlight, so he could examine it at his ease, and he told me it looked like a top-boot, fifteen feet high at the least. He drew his sword and tried to run it through, but his sword was snatched out of his hands, how, he can't say."

"And then he took to his legs like the others, I suppose," said the widow, shrugging her shoulders.

"No," returned Madame Desrosiers, somewhat piqued, "he had the

conrage to remain, and run the risk of being strangled by the devil who must dwell in this leg. But the phantom then moved slowly away, beckoning him to follow."

"Beckoning! How?"

"With a huge arm, as black and hairy as the rest of his person."

"Oh, so the leg has arms now!"

"You may believe me or not as you please," cried Madame Desrosiers, feeling insulted by so much obstinacy, "but it is certain that Landouiller followed the spectre at some distance through the wood, and at a certain spot the phantom suddenly vanished, as if the earth had swallowed it up. The valiant watchman returned in broad daylight to the spot where he had seen it vanish, but could find no trace of it."

"And what is still more certain," added M. Desrosiers, "no one will now go the rounds by night, so that in my capacity of steward, I have felt bound to report the matter."

Gabrielle had listened to every word of the conversation, which, under any other circumstances, would have interested her but little. Two or three times in the week she was in the habit of meeting Charles Valréas just at the hour when the spectre appeared at the end of the avenue, and she felt surprised she had seen nothing of it. She knew that Charles was proscribed, and might have enemies; this might be some plot against him, and she resolved to brave the phantom that night, and warn him.

"There will soon be an end to the joke, if it be one," continued M. Desrosiers, "for I made my report to the prefect yesterday, and the First Consul has no doubt given orders already that will bring the Black Leg to its senses."

"To punishment, you mean," said the sonorous voice of a person who had opened the door softly—Major Robert himself, in full uniform, booted and spurred.

There was a general cry of surprise and pleasure, for the officer was popular with every one, and had not been expected back so soon. Gabrielle was overjoyed, and ran to embrace her brother with almost hysterical fondness.

"My dear little sister," said the Major, clasping her to his breast, "but how excited you seem! You might have expected never to see me again!"

"When you go on one of these secret missions, I always feel so terribly anxious," murmured the girl.

"You need not fear, the Chouans are afraid of me, and I am familiar with bullets. I have just been over all Brittany in a post-chaise, escorted by two gendarmes in mufti, and we have scarcely received a dozen shots. Good evening to you, Madame Desrosiers, and to all the ladies. You were talking about the black spectre, were you not, Desrosiers?"

"What, have you heard—"

"Why, I arrived only this morning, and went straight to the Tuileries. I happened to be closeted with the First Consul just when the prefect brought him your report to read."

"And what do you think of it, Major?"

"That your watchmen are a set of cowards, and as to the Black Leg, it must be some invention of these Chouans, possibly a new sort of infernal machine."

"Chouans! But can there be any in Paris?" cried M. Desrosiers.

"More than I like, though I am doing my best to catch them. This time, they will not escape, as the Black Leg will find this very night."

"Can you be meaning to attack it yourself?"

"Not to-night, at any rate, for I must ride back again to the Tuileries; I only came here to see Gabrielle for a few minutes. But Sergeant Castagnol is with me, he has no fear of spectres, and he will take a turn round the park to-night with his sword and pistols."

"Ah, I told you it was no phantom," said the strong-minded widow.

Meanwhile Gabrielle, who was still holding her brother's hands, led him to the furthest corner of the room, where she placed herself by his side on a yellow sofa.

"Since you have but a few minutes to bestow upon me, you must at least let me have you all to myself," said she tenderly.

"Do you hear, ladies?" said the Major, "this little girl wants to have exclusive possession of me, so I hope you will excuse us."

"Oh, pray do not mind us," exclaimed Madame Desrosiers graciously, "the card table is awaiting us."

Within a few minutes indeed, the company had become completely absorbed in their game, and François Robert was able to converse freely with his sister. "You seemed to be away such an age!" sighed she; "I had so many things to tell you!"

"So had I!" exclaimed the Major, gaily. "To begin with, I have a surprise for you. I have found my little sister a husband."

"A husband for me!" stammered Gabrielle, turning pale.

"Yes, for you," said the officer, joyously. "Is there anything so terrible in the news? You will be of age in the Year XII., which begins in a few days, and I suppose you do not mean to remain single all your life."

"I never want to leave you, dear brother," murmured the girl, seizing both his hands.

"Nor I you, but I am a soldier, obliged to go where I am ordered, and if anything were to happen to me, I should like you to have a brave fellow to care for you and children to love you. So that is why I have thought of my friend, an officer in the Consul's guard, who is only a captain yet, but will be a colonel in three years and a general in six, however little war we may have. He danced with you last winter at the Tuileries ball, and has been madly in love with you ever since."

"It is impossible to love a woman after only seeing her once."

"Oh, there is such a thing as love at first sight, and my friend Perlier is as impetuous in love as in war! He asked me for your hand the very day I started, and wanted to come to Malmaison to pay his addresses at once, but I thought I had better consult you first."

"You were quite right, for I have no wish to see him."

"Why not? He is a brave officer and a handsome fellow, good and kind-hearted, just the man to suit you. He has no fortune, certainly."

"Nor have I," said Gabrielle quickly, delighted to seize on any excuse.

"You are mistaken, my dear, for the First Consul approves of the match, and promises to give you five thousand freshly coined napoleons on your wedding-day. So that objection is disposed of, and I dare say you only made it for appearance sake. No girl likes to accept an offer at once."

"Especially when she does not know the suitor."

"Well, you know a little of Perlier, for you have danced with him, but you have a right to know more; keep him on trial for a month or six weeks, you can make acquaintance throughout the autumn, and be married in the winter."

Gabrielle cast down her eyes and made no reply.

"Come," said the officer, gently, "speak, my dear child; what answer must I give to Perlier, who will be waiting anxiously for my return? Must I give you forty-eight hours to make up your mind?"

"Yes," replied his sister eagerly, "I will think it over, and see."

"Well, don't be too long in making up your mind. I shall come here with the General the day after to-morrow, and expect an answer then; it will be yes, I hope, for I am convinced that Perlier's wife will be the happiest of women."

"Now, brother," cried Gabrielle, gaily, "you have given me an armistice, as you military men would call it, of forty-eight hours. During that time, we will not talk of this marriage, and now I have a confession and a request to make."

"Oh, that sounds serious," exclaimed the officer, pretending to look grave.

"First of all," said Gabrielle, "you must know that I narrowly escaped being killed, the very evening you went away."

"Killed? What are you talking about?" exclaimed Robert, with a frown on his brow.

"Why, only fancy, the Desrosiers were determined to see the fête and the fireworks at Tivoli, and I was silly enough to go with them."

"You were silly, indeed, my little sister, and I am surprised that you, who are generally so retiring—"

"I asked Madame Bonaparte's leave to go, and she granted it."

"Madame Bonaparte does not exactly replace me as your guardian, and if I had been consulted—but what happened?"

"The decorations caught fire, and frightful confusion ensued. I became separated from Madame Desrosiers, and should inevitably have been crushed to death in the crowd, had not Heaven sent me a protector."

"You ought not to have exposed yourself to any such risk, Gabrielle," said the Major in a grave and gentle tone. "Think what a figure I should have cut if this silly old woman had told me, on my return, that my sister had been crushed to death at a public ball! Fie upon you, Mademoiselle, you ought to blush—"

"And so I do, brother, up to my ears, as you see!"

Gabrielle was indeed blushing, but perhaps, not merely for her imprudence; she had arrived at a delicate point of her story.

"Well, go on," said the officer. "Who was this protector? Did M. Desrosiers—"

"Oh no, he was thrown down in the crowd, and had great difficulty in finding his wife even. It was a generous stranger who protected me from certain death by risking his own safety."

"Indeed!" said François Robert with surprise and some anxiety.

"Yes, brother, a young man who courageously undertook to rescue me, and after saving my life, showed himself as considerate and respectful as he had been valiant in the danger."

"This stranger seems to possess many virtues," said the Major coldly, "and it will be difficult for us to discharge the debt of gratitude you owe him. But I should like to hear the rest of the story."

"He offered to take me home, and as I had no hopes of meeting the Desrosiers again, I was obliged to accept his escort. He brought me to the door of the park in a carriage, I thanked him warmly, and—he took leave of me."

"Not without asking if he might see you again, I suppose?"

"No, he asked me, and I told him he might call upon Madame Desrosiers."

"And has he done so?"

"No, François." In saying this, Gabrielle had no intention of concealing the whole truth, but she wished first to interest her brother in her deliverer, and obtain his promise to protect him, before completing her confession.

"Well," said the Major, frowning, "this is a very awkward position. I should be glad to show my gratitude to this knight, but I don't see how it is to be done."

"Oh," said Gabrielle, "I can easily tell you, for I wanted you to do him a favour."

"What favour?"

"Oh, nothing beyond but what is granted every day. Merely to get his name erased from the proscribed list."

"Oh, then your fine champion is outlawed, is he?"

Gabrielle nodded assent.

"And he has returned to France without leave, as so many are doing now? The First Consul is too indulgent, but your protector is still liable to be shot on the spot if his identity were ascertained."

"I know it, François, and that is why I ask you to plead for him."

"Hem!" muttered the Major, "it is a nice commission to undertake! However, since he has saved your life, you may tell me his name and I will bring it under Bonaparte's consideration."

"His name is Valréas—Charles Valréas."

"Valréas!" repeated the officer in such a tone of excitement that the card-players started from their seats.

"What is the matter, Major?" asked Madame Desrosiers. "Has that little rogue been playing you some trick?"

"Oh no! Only the rheumatism I got at the siege of Mantua gives me a twinge now and then."

Gabrielle had turned very pale and was endeavouring to read in the Major's eyes the cause of the irritation that appeared on his face. "Did I understand you to say the man's name was Valréas?" asked he, abruptly.

"Yes," murmured she, more and more troubled.

"Is he not young, of medium height, but so slight that he looks tall, of dark complexion, with blue eyes, white teeth and a sweet voice?"

"That is his very portrait—can you have met M. Valréas?"

"Listen to me, dear sister," said the officer, grasping her wrist. "You say that this man saved your life at Tivoli, and so you wish me to intercede for him? Well, the man is a Chouan."

"A Chouan!" repeated the young girl, mechanically, scarcely understanding what the word meant.

"Yes, a Chouan, a villain capable of any crime." Gabrielle pressed her hand to her throbbing heart.

"And what is more," continued François, vainly endeavouring to restrain his indignation, "this man has come to Paris on purpose to assassinate the First Consul."

"He an assassin! Oh, that is impossible."

"Impossible or not, he tried to drown me at a certain ford near Gisors, where he and his confederates laid an abominable trap for us. By the way, was he alone at Tivoli?"

"No, there was an older man, his servant, I think, who helped to save me."

"That must be the rascal who drove along the Dieppe road, and induced

us to go into the water. And was there not a tall, ungainly fellow there too, with a pasty face—”

“And fair hair that hangs over it,” added the girl, involuntarily completing the description.

“Just so!” cried the officer. “That is the trio. I suppose this Valréas, as he chooses to call himself, was not so imprudent as to tell you where he lived?”

“No,” answered Gabrielle, faintly.

“It was impudent enough of him to talk of calling on the Desrosiers, and he may turn up some day. But when he does, he will be marched to prison and brought before a military tribunal. I will lodge a description of him this very night in order—”

“No, François,” said the girl, clasping her hands, “you will not do that, for he saved me from a horrible death!”

These words, spoken in a trembling voice, suddenly quelled the Major’s wrath. He looked and saw the tears standing in his sister’s eyes. He passed his arm round her waist and kissed her forehead, saying with some emotion: “You are right. Since this Chouan has rendered you this great service, I ought to let him off, and if he should venture to show himself here, I will give you leave to warn him that his description is lodged with the police, and that he will be wise to escape to England if he can.”

The poor child tried to throw herself on his neck, but he restrained her, smiling kindly as he said: “No demonstrations, or Madame Desrosiers will want to know what it is all about. I am going back to Paris, and will forget all about your imprudence if you never remind me of it.”

“Oh, thank you, François, thank you!” murmured Gabrielle, “if you only knew the anxiety I felt, if I were to tell you—”

“Tell me nothing, I don’t want to hear how this fellow has turned your head; I can guess that you have exchanged pretty speeches, and possibly, vows. At your age, a girl is ready to believe in fine words, especially from the lips of a handsome young fellow to whom she owes her life. But of one thing I feel certain,” said the officer, emphasizing his words, “that you have never done anything that would disgrace the daughter of our worthy father.”

“No, indeed, brother,” exclaimed the girl, in a sincere tone which quite reassured the Major.

“Well, then, my dear Gabrielle,” resumed he affectionately, “I beg you to dismiss this man from your thoughts. An unfortunate accident has placed you at his mercy; he has rendered you a great service without taking advantage of it, and so I will consent to forget him, if you do the same.”

“I will try,” muttered Gabrielle.

“And you will succeed, if you try hard. Why, a brave fellow like Perlier, who has risen every step by his own distinguished conduct, is worth far more than a man whose life has been spent in fighting and conspiring against France. But I am not going to preach; you may think the matter over, and Perlier can wait.

Gabrielle was about to protest that Perlier would have to wait an indefinite time, but the officer sealed her lips with a kiss, and rose to take leave, saying to the card-players:

“Good-evening, ladies, and do not dream of this phantom. My old trooper Castagnol will dispose of it this very night.”

Gabrielle would have followed her brother, but he vanished, kissing his

hand to her at the door, and putting his finger to his lips to enjoin discretion. Leaving the ladies to their game, and M. Desrosiers to his nap, she retired immediately to her own room, where she was able to give vent to her feelings in a flood of tears. Her day-dream had been suddenly shattered ; it would be impossible for Gabrielle Robert to wed an enemy of the First Consul. But what pained her most was to find that Charles Valréas had deceived her, and for an instant she told herself that she would never see him again, for if she heard his sweet and tender tones, she should lack courage to dismiss him for ever.

But at the same time pity touched her breast, and she said within herself that if Charles were so unfortunate, she ought at least to warn him of his danger. Gabrielle was but a woman after all, and easily found an argument to support her inclinations. As she hesitated, the clock struck twelve, and, throwing a cloak over her shoulders, she ran out to bid an eternal farewell to the proscribed man. A secret staircase at the corner of the west wing gave her easy access to the garden without meeting any one, for most of the suite were in Paris with the First Consul and his wife, and only two soldiers were left as guards at the principal entrance to the mansion.

She walked with a firm step towards the bowling-green, thinking only of her own troubles, and quite forgetting the black phantom that was supposed to haunt the plantation. Just as she was about to enter this, she heard a rustling among the branches, which made her start, and though she looked and could see nothing, it brought the story to her mind ; for the first time, the thought crossed her that Charles Valréas might know something of the horrible plots with which her brother connected the apparition, but the idea was too repulsive to be credited.

She listened again, but the sound had ceased, and she walked on with a beating heart. Valréas was already at the trysting-place, singing an old love-song which had been agreed upon as their signal. Before he had reached the third verse, the young girl had entered the hornbeam bower, and sank on a grassy seat, without offering her hand, as usual, to be covered with kisses.

"For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" cried he.

She made no answer, and though it was too dark to see her tears, a magnetic sympathy told him that she was weeping, as he flung himself at her feet.

"Leave me," murmured she in a voice stifled by sobs.

"What have I done?" asked he gently.

"You have deceived me."

"Deceived you, I?"

"Yes, for you swore you were an unfortunate exile, only awaiting your pardon to proclaim your love for me."

"I swear it still, Gabrielle, and what is more, even before my name is erased from the fatal list of 1792, I swear that I shall be free to ask your hand as my wife, without dreading the consequences."

"Your wife!" repeated the girl, sadly. "How can you keep your word?"

"The hour is at hand, Gabrielle, when you will doubt me no longer, for I shall no longer be bound by a secret which preys upon me, and I may be able to offer you a name which I have made illustrious by my services in a noble cause."

"What do you mean? Are you not involved in a conspiracy?"

"Well, yes, since you have divined my secret ; I am conspiring, or rather fighting, on behalf of a king who may be restored to his throne within a month or even a fortnight, and will not forget the humblest servant, who has risked his life on his behalf. However that may be, the government which persecutes me will be overthrown, and no one will have a right to come between us."

"Then it was true !" murmured Gabrielle.

"What did you know ?"

"I knew all that you have told me, and also what you have not dared to confess, that you are conspiring against the man who has restored tranquillity and prosperity to our unhappy country, against the benefactor to whom I owe everything, for, but for him, I should be but a poor seamstress, obliged to toil for my daily bread."

"Who has told you ?"

"Who ? My brother, whom Bonaparte has made an officer, and whom the conspirators must kill before they can touch the First Consul."

"Your brother ! The Major !" repeated St. Victor, disconcerted ; "then he has arrived, and he knows—"

"I saw him but an hour ago, and asked him to plead for you."

"And did you tell him my name ?"

"Yes, for you had forgotten to caution me against doing so, just as you had forgotten to tell me how Charles Valréas had treated Major Robert, quite recently, on the Dieppe road."

St. Victor hung down his head, and could not find a word to say for himself.

"Will you repeat that the hour is at hand when I may openly confess my love for you," asked Gabrielle, bitterly, "and can you suppose I should be happy to marry my brother's mortal enemy ?"

"Your brother !" cried the supposed Valréas ; "can you suppose I should ever allow a hair of his head to be injured ? Do you think that on the day we see the usurper overthrown, I shall not hold out my hand to Major Robert to lead him before the king, who will confirm him in his appointment ?"

"Men like François Robert cannot serve two masters. He would spare you too if you were at his mercy, because you saved my life, but he would never insult you by asking you to turn traitor."

St. Victor was about to make an energetic protest, when the hoot of an owl broke the stillness around. "There is some one coming ! We must make our escape," murmured he, trying to draw her away. Gabrielle was endeavouring to free herself, when two shots were fired in quick succession. They were followed by a hoarse cry, suddenly stifled, and then the profoundest silence reigned around. St. Victor could almost have persuaded himself that he had only imagined these sounds, had not Gabrielle, who had been attempting to escape, now clung to his arm, murmuring faintly : "A man has been killed—the murderer is there."

"Come," said the Chouan, and this time she made no attempt to resist, as he dragged her along a narrow path which skirted the wall of the park. When they separated, Charles Valréas had been in the habit of following this path, which led to the little door of which he had the key, while Gabrielle returned to the house by the long avenue. This night, however, her courage failed her to take the path on which she might find a corpse lying. She trembled as she allowed St. Victor to lead her on to the little door, where he seated her on a wooden bench, and stood before her,

anxiously keeping his eyes and ears alert. He feared that the shots might have summoned the patrol from the house, and was chiefly concerned lest Gabrielle should be surprised wandering in the park at such an hour, so, though the danger was yet greater to himself, he was on the point of offering to escort her to the foot of her staircase, when she said sadly : " Now go ; we shall never meet again."

" Go ! Never see you again ! Desert you in this hour of danger !"

" I would rather risk any danger than remain another instant with the accomplice of a murderer."

" What do you mean, Gabrielle ?"

" I know all. This pretended phantom, this Black Leg, is the man whom you post in the wood every night, and who, while professing to guard us, is seeking for means to assassinate the First Consul."

" A phantom ! A Black Leg !" repeated St. Victor stupefied.

" Do not pretend to look astonished ! Who but you could have invented this wicked masquerade ? My brother was right when he warned me of the audacity and villainy of the Chouans."

" Gabrielle," said the lieutenant, in a tone of sincerity which it was impossible to mistake, " I give you my word as a soldier and a gentleman that I know nothing of all this. I have given a devoted comrade of mine orders to watch over us, but I have never authorised any attack on General Bonaparte either in his house or grounds, and cannot explain those pistol shots, or the cry we have just heard, for our protector is unarmed."

" If you were only speaking the truth !" murmured the girl.

" Can you doubt me, when I swear by my honour and your love. I would not tell you a lie to save my life !"

" And yet you are conspiring against the First Consul, for you confessed as much just now ?"

" Yes, but I am conspiring loyally. I am risking my head on the chance of restoring the monarchy, but I have nothing to do with hired assassins stationed to shoot Bonaparte in his park by night. When I encounter him, it will be by daylight and in the midst of his soldiers."

" But what does that matter, when my brother will be always by his side !" cried the young girl.

St. Victor made no answer at first, and then said gravely : " Under any circumstances, your brother's life shall be held sacred, and I will sacrifice my life or risk a defeat, rather than lift a finger against him. And now, I wait your orders. If you forbid me to see you, or refuse even after our cause has triumphed—"

" Listen," said Gabrielle, interrupting him.

A measured footfall was heard in the distance. " It is the sentry," whispered St. Victor, " I see a light."

" They are coming this way. Begone, I entreat you," implored she.

" Leave you alone, in danger of being arrested—never ! Since you send me away for ever, I would rather die here, and let these soldiers' bayonets run me through."

" Here they come, skirting the wall. Fly, while there is yet time—I adjure you by all that is most sacred—by our love—"

" Ah ! Then you love me still ? Will you consent to come and meet me once more—only once ?"

" Three days hence—at midnight," stammered the young girl, forgetting everything but the imminent danger. The sentry was close at hand.

" Farewell Gabrielle !" cried St. Victor, " and thank you ; in three

days I shall be at the bowling-green, but it shall be our last secret meeting, and within a month I vow to ask your brother for your hand, for everything in France will be changed."

Gabrielle felt ready to faint, but had still sufficient presence of mind to choose her path for escape. She knew of an overgrown track which crossed the thick plantation, and would bring her out on the avenue. She flew along it, and when she reached the thick shades, rested for an instant against a tree to take breath: the moon suddenly shone out from behind a cloud, and disclosed a corpse lying not fifty paces distant. She tried to flee from the frightful spectacle, but her limbs gave way beneath her; suddenly it occurred to her that the man might not be dead, but only wounded, when, mastering her terror, she rushed to the spot.

As she approached, she could see the glitter of the silver buttons and lace on his uniform, and wholly forgetting that her brother had gone to Paris and was to send Sergeant Castagnol, she thought this was Major Robert's corpse, and, with a shriek, fell fainting on the damp ground beneath the avenue.

VII.

"In three days," had been the lovers' parting words at the little door of the park, and now the third day, or, rather, night had come, and poor Gabrielle was on her bed with a feverish attack, and ready to die with anxiety and vexation. The soldiers who had found her unconscious form lying in the park had carried her back to the house, where Madame Desrosiers had lavished every care upon her. Unfortunately she had only recovered from her faint to fall into a delirium resembling frenzy, and the old doctor feared for her brain. By the time Major Robert had been summoned from Paris, however, he found his sister out of danger, but so prostrate that she could scarcely express her delight at finding her darling brother alive. The doctor had ordered her perfect rest, and François Robert would neither question her nor allow her to speak, but kissed her tenderly, and whispered: "You must keep quiet, dear sister, the doctor says so."

He had established himself at Malmaison, and passed the whole day at Gabrielle's bedside, only allowing himself to be replaced at night by Madame Desrosiers, who, in spite of all her vagaries, proved a devoted nurse. Of course the melancholy adventure and the tragic death of Castagnol, whom the patrol had found in the park, not far from Mademoiselle Robert's fainting form, had produced a great excitement throughout the household, but Major Robert's imperative way of dealing with the matter had prevented the story from going any further.

After a medical investigation, at which the officer had insisted on being present, the corpse of the poor sergeant had been buried quietly in the Rueil cemetery, and by the close of the third day, the incident seemed merely to have resulted in Mademoiselle Robert's illness and the installation at Malmaison of the officer and one of his corporals. Nothing more had been heard of the spectre, and the watchmen and servants had instructions not to walk in the park after sunset until further orders.

At eleven o'clock that night, every one was asleep except Gabrielle and the brother seated by her bedside, while Madame Desrosiers was at the other end of the house reading a thrilling novel, which she was intending

soon to finish in the sick-room, and Corporal Barbot sat over a bottle of wine in a low room on the ground floor.

Gabrielle had passed a tranquil day; the fever had gone, but left her very weak, and her bodily suffering was replaced by mental anguish. As her memory returned, she recalled with terror that this was the night she had promised again to meet Charles Valréas, and that he might fall into the hands of his enemies for lack of warning. She longed to question her brother, yet feared to learn some fresh tidings of horror, and she tossed about on her sick-bed till the Major asked if she were in more pain.

"No," said she half sobbing, "but I feel so frightened."

"Frightened of what, my dear Gabrielle?" asked the officer calmly.

"Of what has been happening here," stammered the invalid. "That corpse is always before my eyes, and I shudder lest—lest any one else should share his fate."

"Don't be distressed, dear. I have reason to believe that Castagnol's assassins will not venture into the park again; at any rate, they have never been seen they committed that atrocious murder."

"Thank Heaven! but how can you be sure?" asked Gabrielle timidly.

"If they had returned, I should have met them, for I have passed the last two nights at the place haunted by this pretended spectre."

"What? Have you been in the wood—and—have you seen nothing?"

"Nothing at all. This Black Leg seems to have been scared away."

"Indeed," said Gabrielle, with a sigh of relief. "Then you will not go again, will you? for these wretches don't deserve that you should—"

"Without discussing their merits, I am resolved to pursue them till I have exterminated them."

"What do you mean, François?"

"That I have missed them twice, but to-night I hope to be more fortunate."

"What? Will you risk your life again?" asked she in dismay.

"Do not be alarmed; I go armed, and the first scamp I catch sight of will receive a bullet, whether he be disguised or not."

Gabrielle turned livid. "And supposing they lie in wait for you in the wood and fire on you," murmured she, feeling desperate; "oh, François, what will become of me?"

"If they kill me, dear sister," said the officer gravely, "the First Consul will take charge of you, and beside, you can marry my friend Perlier. It is something to be the wife of a captain in the consular guard. So do not distress yourself, but go to sleep, and let me find you quite well by morning," said the officer, rising.

"Oh, brother, let me entreat you to stay by my side this night!" cried the unhappy girl, half frantic at the idea of an encounter between him and Valréas.

"Impossible! Good-bye!" said the officer, buckling his belt.

"Oh, François, you cannot know—do stay and I will tell you all, I will own what I had hoped to conceal from you—"

"I do not wish to listen to any confessions," said the Major, interrupting her; "if Gabrielle Robert has disgraced herself, I should be sorry ever to hear it, for I could never forgive her."

And bending over Gabrielle, who had sunk back exhausted, he kissed her on the forehead, and with a friendly greeting to Madame Desrosiers, as she entered to relieve guard, left the room before the poor girl could renew her entreaties. As soon as he had closed the door, he drew himself together,

like a man who has just discharged a painful duty, and is preparing for energetic action, and made his way to the room below, where Corporal Barbot was smoking his pipe after finishing his bottle.

"Where are the weapons?" asked he, after the corporal had saluted.

The man rose and went to a cupboard, from which he produced two pair of pistols, two swords, and two pointed knives. "I have loaded the pistols myself and seen to the sharpening of the swords and daggers. We shall be ready to receive this spectre, if it comes near the thick avenue, where poor Castagnol was unlucky enough to meet it."

"I fail to understand how the villain could have killed Castagnol, who was both strong and agile. He must have been taken by surprise."

"Asking your pardon, captain, I don't think that was it. You know the sergeant's pistols were found lying by his side, discharged, and his sword at a little distance."

"Just so, and that seems to show he was attacked first."

"Yes, he must have fired twice on the phantom and missed it. It is not so easy to aim in the dark, especially at a spectre. Castagnol must then have unsheathed his sword, but the Black Leg must have darted upon him, disarmed him, and wrung his neck."

"Yes, the surgeon-major's report stated that no wound was to be found on the body, and that he had probably been strangled. His assassin must have been a man of extraordinary strength, and this makes me suspect that Castagnol fell in with an old acquaintance of ours."

"May I venture to ask whom you mean?"

"That coachman whom we met at the ford, the man who made you tipsy at Forges, and tried to drown us all in the Epte."

"That Chouan? Well, he looked as if he had strength enough for anything, but since the woman is now lodged in prison, I don't know what should bring him here."

"Other reasons possibly, but I care little, so long as I can make an end of him. And now we must be starting, since those spectres are always so punctual in appearing at midnight. By-the-by though, you profess a knowledge of the ways of ghosts, can you explain why we have not seen them for the last two nights?"

"Well, I never heard of their appearing to more than one person at a time. It may be because there were two of us."

"I feel sure of it, so I will go alone."

"Oh, Major," said Barbot, "never think of such a thing! You, a superior officer, to expose yourself to the attacks of this prowling creature, which may be either a man or a leg. Stay here, and let me go and settle it."

"Thank you, Barbot, you are a brave fellow," said François Robert, grasping the corporal's hand, "but I have reasons of my own for going alone, so do not insist on accompanying me, and fear nothing. I will be prudent."

"I know what your prudence is," murmured Barbot, after a pause. "I am bound to obey orders, of course, but—if I hear a pistol fired, am I still to stay here?"

"If you should hear a pistol fired, you may know that I am struggling with the Black Leg, and in that case, you may come to my assistance. It is just on the stroke of twelve. Good-night," and François Robert started on his expedition.

Since his sister's adventure, the officer had been determined to punish

the author of her troubles. Gabrielle's innocent revelations had alarmed him more than he chose to show, and having imagined he recognised the hand of the audacious Chouans who had previously attempted to outwit him, he was anxious to crush this new plot without compromising his imprudent little sister.

The moon had not yet risen when he crossed the park, but the night was clear and starlit ; as he approached the spot where his unfortunate sergeant had fallen, he slackened his pace, and was just about to enter the avenue, when the cry of an owl was suddenly heard in the wood.

" Ah ! " said he, between his teeth, " then I was not mistaken. I know you, vile bird, and will soon dispose of you," and taking one of his pistols from his belt, he loaded it, put his finger on the trigger, and waited. He could see nothing at first, but as soon as his eyes became accustomed to the thick shade, he could distinguish a dark object against the silvery bole of a beech tree. It was a huge, shapeless mass, which moved slowly up and down, like a giant amusing himself by alternately bending and straightening his knees. The Major could have fired at once, but wished first to make sure of his aim. " Hallo, you Black Leg," cried he, " you look hideous enough, but I am not frightened of you. Come and let me have a look at your nose ! "

The phantom was evidently piqued by this greeting, for, leaving the plantation, it glided softly into the avenue, allowing François Robert a good view of the monstrosity. It resembled a colossal leg, surmounted by an enormous nose and a cocked hat decorated with a long crape veil. This disguise, which, in full daylight, would have seemed simply grotesque, acquired a fantastic aspect by night, capable of alarming the bravest. The moving leg seemed like a limb detached from the body of some colossal demon ; it stood there silent and motionless, as if merely to bar the officer's progress, and present itself as a target.

Robert examined it for an instant, and then, suddenly raising his pistol, fired. The spectre swayed for an instant on its single foot, but did not fall or recoil an inch. Robert threw away his pistol, and, aiming more carefully, fired the second. The leg never stirred. This time the officer felt his flesh creep, but he instantly regained his self-possession, and drawing his sword, ran promptly forward : the Black Leg did not await his attack, but, turning on itself, bounded rapidly out of reach. " Villain ! " cried Robert, " you may flee, but you shall not escape me."

Then the strangest pursuit ensued. The spectre, after turning round at miraculous speed, began to stride over stumps and bushes, breaking through the wood like a wild boar, and endeavouring apparently to get lost in the thicket. It was evidently a capricious spectre ; it had strangled the unlucky sergeant without ceremony, and now it was taking to its heels before the superior officer ; Robert might have suspected some trap, but he was carried away by the ardour of the chase. He followed so close that the point of his sword more than once pierced the phantom's shell, but it seemed proof against steel and lead, and never slackened speed. The Major began to repent having left Barbot behind, for with his assistance he should certainly have managed to lay hands on the apparition, still he followed hard, occasionally receiving a knock from the rebound of some branch violently pushed aside by the fantastic leg, and pursuing it with invectives as he ran. " Stop, coward ! Face about, miserable Chouan ! " he bawled, but the leg only ran all the faster ; at length, however, the Major fancied he had caught it, for it stopped short as if caught in a thick bush. He fell

on it with his sword uplifted, but the ground gave way beneath his feet, and down he fell. For an instant he was conscious of having received a violent shock, and then—he knew no more.

When he came to his senses, he could see by the dim light of a lantern lying beside him, a man stooping and sharpening on a stone a large knife with a horn handle. He tried to rise and fly at the throat of this individual, whom at first he failed to recognise, but he discovered instantly that he could move neither arms nor legs, for his limbs had been bound with cords during the short time he had remained unconscious. By the greatest effort of self-control he uttered no sound, but, half-closing his eyes lest the man should discover he had regained his senses, he examined the surroundings. Above his head lay a ruined vault, overhung with ivy, by his side a few stones that had recently become detached from the wall, and in a corner, some singular habiliments, which had probably played a part in the masquerade which had ended in such disastrous consequences to himself.

The man could be none other than he who had worn the disguise, and the Major could not catch sight of his face as he bent over the cutlass he was sharpening, but a bull-neck, herculean shoulders, and enormous sinewy hands were visible. These were certainly the hands that must have strangled Castagnol, and Robert now closed his eyes and only asked himself why his enemy should trouble himself to sharpen a knife, when he had him at his mercy. He gave one thought to the sister, whose thoughtlessness was about to cost him his life, and his devoted affection easily forgave her; he told himself that the First Consul would provide for her, and that after all he might as well die by a Chouan's knife as by an Austrian bullet. He commended his soul to God, Who can judge and recompense, and prepared to die. His one regret was at having to leave the world without ridding his General of the dangerous band of conspirators whose existence was proclaimed by some fresh outrage every day, but he consoled himself with the idea that Bonaparte, impressed by the fate of one of his officers, would avenge it, and be more careful in guarding his own safety.

There still remained a faint hope that Barbot, alarmed by the pistol shots, might hasten to his assistance, but how could he find this den, or even if he did, what could his appearance do but hasten the fate of his superior officer? As these gloomy thoughts traversed his mind, he fancied he heard steps overhead; an owl began to hoot at the entrance of the cavern, and the voice of the supposed spectre gave an answering call which mimicked the bird to perfection.

A man then appeared at the opening whom he instantly recognised. This was the young dandy whom he had seen at the inn at Forges, who called himself by the name of Valréas, and had captivated Gabrielle. His blood boiled in his veins, and he had the greatest difficulty in refraining from telling him his mind, but still he resolved to die silently rather than exhibit any impotent rage, and this was perhaps the most heroic feat he performed that night.

"What has happened? What are you about there?" asked the supposed Valréas of his accomplice, who was still intent on whetting his blade.

"The gendarme fired two bullets close to me," said the pretended phantom.

"And did he hit you?"

"Oh no! He imagined, like the other, that my head lay in the centre of my black leg, and he aimed too high."

"But he chased you, for I heard his steps and his voice."

"Yes, he pricked my loins with his sword, but I played him a fine trick. When we reached the edge of the hole, I darted to one side, and he ran straight on like a wild boar, and fell head foremost into the cave."

"And was he killed in the fall?" asked Valréas, quickly.

"No, these gendarmes have hard bones; he has only got a few bruises. There he is, a little shaken by his fall. He has not come to himself yet, so I have employed the time in binding his limbs."

Valréas stooped down and saw the officer stretched on a heap of rubbish with his face pale and bleeding, and his eyes closed, looking like a corpse.

"Are you sure he is not dead?" asked he, anxiously.

"Certain, but we need not rouse him. I have been sharpening my knife, because I mean to finish him handsomely, without making him suffer, seeing he is an officer."

"What has that to do with it? Have you forgotten my orders, or that this man's life is sacred?" asked Valréas, in a tone of irritation.

"I have forgotten nothing," muttered the old campaigner, "but that girl seems to have turned your head. This Bonapartist is brother to your Livoli beauty, but why should we spare him on that account? He has done his best to kill me, and it is my turn now."

"Well," said Valréas, calmly, drawing a pistol from his pocket, "if you try to lay a finger on him, I shall blow out your brains."

The Chouan raised his knife, but recoiled from St. Victor's glance, like a tiger relinquishing his prey. "All right," said he roughly; "you are my commanding officer, but Cadoudal is yours, and if he knew that you had mercy on a gendarme, that would be enough for him. It does not signify to me, but you may ask some one else to mount guard for you henceforth; I don't care to act as target for these *blues*."

"I shall not require your services again. The young lady has not come to the trysting-place to-night, why, I know not, but I have made up my mind not to meet her again, till I can show myself in full daylight, and under my real name. So you can make yourself easy, for we shall not set foot in this park again."

"I hope not, indeed. But you must be mad to talk of going to see the sister of a gendarme officer in broad daylight. You will want to marry her next."

"So I do, and in another month she may possibly be my wife, for by that time we shall have made an end of the usurper, and as I once told you on the banks of the Seine, when the king reigns again over France, and makes me a colonel, Major Robert will not refuse me his sister's hand."

"Villain!" exclaimed the prisoner, raising himself by a desperate effort.

"Ah! there he is coming to himself," muttered Malabry, "this was just the moment to despatch him."

"Sir," said Valréas, surprised but not disconcerted, "pray believe that I sincerely regret this treatment of an enemy whom I respect. My comrade has been over-hasty in his proceedings, but I hope you are not much hurt, and before leaving you, we will carry you into the park, where you can summon the people of the house to your assistance. I trust you will forgive—"

"Forgive you, rebel!" cried François Robert; "if my hands were not bound, I would tear you to pieces—I have heard all your villainy—I know that you have seduced an unhappy young girl, and that it will be her

death—I know that you are a Chouan whom Cadoudal has sent to assassinate the First Consul—”

“Ah, you know too much, and I must cut your throat,” said Malabry, advancing, knife in hand. Valréas, however, darted between him and the prisoner.

“Kill me,” cried the Major, “kill me! If you let me live, I shall have no mercy on you. What are you waiting for? Must I spit in your face to force you to despatch me?”

Valréas turned white, but still did not make way for the old Chouan, who was brandishing his cutlass. At this moment, a voice was heard in the plantation, it was that of the corporal in search of his officer.

“Here, Barbot, here!” shouted Robert, “and fire on the Chouans!”

“By the powers,” said Malabry, “this time you shall not prevent me from killing him!” But Valréas put the muzzle of his pistol under his nose and cried:

“If you advance one step, I fire!” Then, bending over Gabrielle’s brother, who was still shouting at the top of his voice, he said, hurriedly: “Farewell, sir; we shall meet next at the Tuileries, either before the king, or before the military council which will shoot me if I fail.”

And pushing the dismayed Chouan before him by his shoulders, St. Victor left the cavern. Within five minutes, they had reached the little door, and were outside the park, running at full speed along the Rueil road, while Barbot, guided by the Major’s shouts, at length found him lying at the foot of the Black Leg, which proved to be merely a pasteboard phantom.

VIII.

SEPTEMBER was drawing to its close, and the Parisians were all flocking into the open air, to make the most of the delightful weather which was crowning the autumn of the year ’12, the last year of the republican era. On one particular day, which was almost the last of the celebrated fair of St. Cloud, those less favoured citizens whose occupations detained them within the walls of the city, contrived to spare at least an hour or two for lounging in the Tuileries gardens or in the still more popular promenade of the *Palais Egalité*, as the Palais Royal was called in those days. The populace seemed delighted to take an airing under the poor trees, which were visibly declining since Camille Desmoulins stripped them of their leaves in 1789, to furnish cockades for the sovereign people.

Could it be reminiscences of the year ’5, which had attracted hither Liardot, the ex-financier of the Rue Vivienne? Could the opulent speculator of 1797 have come to look again at the scene where the mere sight of him had once been enough to produce a fluctuation in the currency? He was certainly there, mingling among the crowd, though it would have required a keen observer to recognise under Sourdat’s dress and downcast eyes the dethroned ruler of the Stock Exchange, or even the Chouan of 1799. The elderly man had sought to acquire the appearance and demeanour of a clerk, but he could not quench the fire of his eye or keen expression of his countenance, so he had his reasons for not looking the world in the face. Fouché had commented on these eyes when he first saw the ex-Chouan, and had ever since tried to avoid them in giving audience to his new secretary, for their glance could be as clear and cold as the flash

of a steel blade : only Bonaparte's eyes could give such a flash, and make Fouché, the regicide under the Convention, who afterwards became Duke of Otranto, tremble in his shoes.

Sourdat, however, had learnt to keep his eyes half closed, and only became his true self in the presence of George Cadoudal, his old comrades, or Louise Maneheu. He was here this morning to see that they were meeting according to command ; he had been with their leader the previous evening, and learnt from his lips that everything was ready and only awaiting Bonaparte's departure for Malmaison. The First Consul had been detained at the Tuileries by business, but would not delay much longer, for it was well known that he was eager to spend a few days at his favourite residence before the fine season came to an end.

Liardot was to have no hand in the actual attack, because Cadoudal had entrusted to him a still more important task. On receiving tidings of Bonaparte's death, he was instantly to take possession of the Police, Home, and War Offices in the name of Louis XVIII., relying on the help of a small band of intelligent and devoted Chouans. When this had been accomplished, they relied on gaining over the army by the aid of certain generals who had already been sounded, while success would rally round their cause the leading civil officials. Liardot, who knew all the ins and outs of the government, was entrusted with this delicate operation also, so it was important he should have notice in the early part of the day. Every morning, from twelve to one, he took a turn in the Palais Royal Gardens, and as soon as he saw Pierre Maneheu, who was to give the signal, he was to return home and await tidings of the event at Rueil which St. Victor was to ride off at once to bring him, when, putting himself at the head of the band of supporters who were assembling each evening in the *Marché des Innocents*, he would march at their head to take possession of the government offices while the decision of the army was yet pending. Everything had been arranged, down to a royal proclamation to the army and French nation, which was ready for posting in the streets. The only thing left to do was to get rid of Bonaparte, and if Cadoudal were to be believed, the usurper's days were numbered.

Liardot was therefore obeying his instructions when he resorted to these gardens, leading Jacobin in a leash to support his character of a quiet citizen. Ever since Louise Maneheu had become an inmate of his house, he had been in the habit of taking the dog out for a walk, though he always held him secured, for fear of accidents, and the brave animal was growing accustomed to his new master, and seemed glad to follow him. The old trooper had scarcely entered the crowded gardens when he caught sight of Tamerlane lounging with his hands in his pockets, his tall figure swaying like a poplar rocked by the wind ; St. Victor a little further on, ogling the fair sex, Malabry leaning against a tree and killing time by raising two chairs on his little finger, while the rest of the Chouans were pacing the walks without showing any signs of recognition. After exchanging a rapid glance with St. Victor, Liardot took his seat on a hired chair which commanded the right side of the garden, fastened Jacobin's leash round the rung of an ordinary seat on which he placed his feet, and spreading out a paper which he had brought on purpose, began to read the latest news, though without losing sight of the arcades.

He had not been thus engaged for five minutes when he felt a clap on his shoulder, and turning round, saw one of Fouché's subalterns whom he frequently met in the ex-minister's office.

"So here I catch you studying the papers, Sourdats," said this man, seating himself without ceremony on the vacant seat to which Jacobin was fastened, "are you taking an interest in politics now?"

"There is not much in the papers," said Liardot, shrugging his shoulders. "I believe I was just dozing off when you startled me."

The ex-financier must have had great self-control to make this careless reply, for he was vexed and even disturbed by this meeting, as his colleague might have been sent to keep an eye on his movements. "The weather is so fine that I wanted a little fresh air before going on to my office," continued he, quietly.

"Ah, just like myself," exclaimed the intruder. "I went to our employer to see whether he had any orders to give me, and as there was nothing to be done to-day, I said to myself, Now, Caillotte, my good fellow, you might indulge yourself with a turn in the Palais-Egalité gardens. I am glad I came, since I have met you here."

"You are very polite, my dear Caillotte, and the pleasure is mutual," said Liardot, graciously, though he could have strangled the vulgar fellow, and was pondering how to rid himself of his company. He could not leave the spot before the appointed hour, and yet, if Maneheu were to appear that day, this man's presence would be very embarrassing, as he would wish to be perfectly unfettered in his movements.

"Is not that the conspirator's dog you have there?" suddenly asked Caillotte, and as he put this abrupt question, he fondled Jacobin, who only growled and showed his teeth. The supposed Sourdats felt taken aback, but soon remembered that Caillotte knew all about Louise Maneheu, since he had chanced to be in Fouché's office when the Major brought in his prisoner on his return from Normandy; it was he indeed who had received orders to facilitate the escape suggested by Sourdats.

"Yes," replied Liardot, coolly, "this dog belongs to that woman, and as I am anxious to get round her, I offer sometimes to take him out for a walk. It is not very amusing, but, as you know, in our career, we are obliged to accommodate ourselves to circumstances."

"I know that well enough, I assure you, Sourdats! Was not I forced to disguise myself as a nurse in order to arrest a deserter whom Barras was anxious to have shot as an example? I will tell you the whole story some day. But I don't much like the looks of that mastiff, I must say."

"No, he bites sometimes. You had better leave him alone."

"Don't be uneasy, for I am always prudent. It is a pity he is so savage, for he is a fine animal, and his mistress is a fine woman, too. What are you doing with her now, Sourdats? Have you contrived to worm anything out of her?"

"Unluckily not, so far, at least. She appears grateful for the service she fancies I have rendered her, and for the kind treatment she receives in my house, but, however skilfully I may try to draw her out, she will never open her lips about the cliff at Biville."

"It is wonderful to find such reticence on the part of a simple peasant; she must either be very resolute or have been trained by George himself. He knows how to get faithful servants, as our employer was saying only this morning."

"Did M. Fouché say that?"

"Yes, he has the greatest confidence in you and respects your talent, but he is astonished that you have not yet managed to worm anything out of this peasant. She is certainly a Norman woman."

"So Fouché has his eye on us both. It is as well to know that," thought Liardot to himself.

"Can you guess what I rejoined?" resumed the police agent.

"No, indeed," said the supposed Sourdat with an absent air, though he was keenly alive all the time, both to his colleague's conversation and to what was passing in the garden.

"I told him that the best way of winning confidences from women was to secure their good graces, and though you are not badly preserved and must have been a good-looking fellow in your day, you are rather too old to make love."

"And what did Fouché say to that?" asked Liardot, interested to know what the ex-minister thought of his relations with Louise Maneheu.

"He told me that I was a fool, and that it was not as easy to seduce a rebel as it was to seduce a fine lady in the days of Barras."

Liardot breathed more freely.

"Besides, such proceedings have their awkward side, as I know to my cost," resumed Caillotte. "Five and-twenty years ago, when I was starting in the service, I missed my chance at the time of that necklace business by playing my part too well with a certain Olivia, and I have never since had an opportunity of rising in the service. I was born for the higher branches, for political investigations, and yet here I stick in the mud, obliged to keep an eye on thieves and vulgar assassins. I have only one hope left."

"And what is that?" asked Liardot absently, feeling on thorns, as he noticed the suspicious glances directed towards him by the Chouans as they passed and noticed this prolonged conversation.

"My hope," returned the spy, "is that I may lay hands on George Cadoudal."

"To enable you to do that, he must be in Paris," said Liardot quietly.

"So he is."

"What! Have you seen him?" asked the supposed Sourdat, quaking.

"No, I have not been so fortunate, but my instinct tells me he is not far off. I seem to scent him, just as your dog is at this moment sniffing the breeze that comes from the Galerie de Valois."

Jacobin was, indeed, straining his neck and dilating his nostrils as he kept his eyes fixed on the arcades, and Liardot found, when it was too late, that he had better have left the dog at home.

"I would give five years of my life, if I had ten before me, to apprehend him, my dear fellow," continued Caillotte.

"How excited you are!" rejoined Liardot. "Have you any personal reasons for hating Cadoudal?"

"None, whatever. I have never even seen him, and, between ourselves, if I had any feeling towards George, it would be one of admiration. I have served many different employers before Fouché, but, at the bottom of my heart, I am a royalist."

"Then, why are you so eager to apprehend Cadoudal?"

"Do you ask why? You can have no true professional feeling if you do not understand why. If I am so eager to arrest George, it is not so much for the reward offered, but for the honour."

"Indeed!" remarked Liardot simply, thinking to himself that such honour was indeed far-fetched.

"Still," resumed he, "it seems scarcely probable that Cadoudal should venture to Paris, where he would be so easily recognised. Nevertheless, I

would bet anything he is here. Major Robert of the picked gendarmes thinks so too; he knows a good deal about the matter, and seems to have overheard a conversation between two Chouans, from which he gathered that George is either come or coming to make some attempt on the life of the First Consul."

"That sounds strange," murmured Liardot, listening now most attentively.

"And these two Chouans belonged to the party who tried to release that woman on the road between Dieppe and Paris."

"I am surprised that M. Fouché has never mentioned this to me."

"Oh, he never mentioned it to me either. I only overheard something while I was waiting in the anteroom, for it is a secret connected with the story of those ghosts at Malmaison; they say some lady in attendance on Madame Bonaparte is slightly compromised, and so the General does not wish it talked about. Why, what can be the matter with your dog," exclaimed the man, suddenly. "Can he have gone mad?"

For an instant, indeed, Jacobin's behaviour seemed to justify Caillotte's apprehensions. He stood on his hind legs, tugged as hard as he could at his rope, uttered short, consecutive barks which sounded like an appeal, and turned from time to time to growl at the man seated on the chair to the rungs of which he was fastened. Liardot, feeling more and more uneasy, was about to seize the leash in order to hold fast the intelligent animal who was evidently aware of the approach of some one he knew, but just as he stooped to unloose it, his eye fell on the Galerie de Valois, and caught sight of Pierre Maneheu, standing on the threshold of one of the arcades. This revealed the secret of Jacobin's excitement, and the danger of the animal's escaping to join his master, since Caillotte, knowing that it belonged to the woman, would be sure to follow it.

Maneheu had only just made his appearance, but the quick eyes of the Chouans had already descried the signal, and they were all quietly moving off in different directions to meet at the appointed rendezvous.

Maneheu, having once ascertained that he had been seen, disappeared promptly behind a pillar. "Thank Heaven he has neither seen me nor the dog," thought Liardot, as he tried to unloose the string in order to lead Jacobin away. "I say, Sourdat," cried Caillotte, "this animal is an uneasy neighbour, and makes me tremble for my calves, so excuse me if I take leave of you."

Nothing could have been more welcome to Liardot, who was in a hurry to return home, and had been puzzling how to rid himself of this troublesome companion. Unluckily (for on what a trifle the ruin of the best planned scheme may hinge) the knot by which the cord was secured to the chair was rather a complicated one, so that Liardot was some time in undoing it. He was obliged also to use both hands, and let loose of the cord he was untying; so, when Caillotte, whose weight had kept the chair in its position, suddenly rose just as it was unfastened, Jacobin, finding himself free, gave a tremendous bound, and in three leaps had vanished under the Galerie de Valois.

"There goes a horrid animal!" exclaimed the police agent. "I congratulate you, Sourdat, on having one mouth less to feed, a mouth, too, filled with the most terrible teeth!"

It would be impossible to describe Liardot's dismay. Jacobin was pursuing his master, and had probably overtaken him already. There was no doubt that he would follow him home. Would the sagacious Caillotte draw

such conclusions as he feared from the dog's escape? It was useless to run after the creature, for it would only have attracted attention to Maneheu, so he thought it better to resign himself to the loss, and try to divert Caillotte's attention.

"A good riddance, indeed," cried he gaily. "I have quite enough on my hands with a woman to guard, without taking such a fierce creature about with me. I have to call in at the office now. Will you come with me?"

"No," said the agent, "I have seen Fouché this morning, and have nothing fresh to tell him. Besides, this is the day when the lottery numbers for Paris are drawn, and I think you know I have a weakness that way, since this philanthropic institution has been re-established. So, good morning, Sourdat, and my compliments to your pretty prisoner." And Caillotte moved off at an even pace towards the Galerie de Valois, and soon disappeared behind the pillars.

His departure only increased Liardot's perplexities, for he could not tell whether the spy were telling the truth, or only making the lottery a pretext. The house in which the numbers were drawn lay close to the palace, and Caillotte was certainly directing his steps towards it. Liardot had no time to spare for fruitless reflections, and decided to return to the Rue des Prouvaires by the shortest cut, which struck across the gardens. He glanced at the Galerie as he passed without catching sight either of Maneheu, Jacobin, or even Caillotte, who, however, could scarcely have had time to get to the end of the arcade. He felt surprised, but walked rapidly home, where Louise Maneheu was distressed on learning that he had lost her dog, as he did not tell her that it had followed her husband. There was much that Liardot thought it best to keep from his prisoner, and she knew nothing of the plot, or of her husband's being established as an inn-keeper in the suburbs of Paris. He was half afraid of Caillotte's craftiness, especially as he had more than once caught him spying about his house, but the die was now cast, so he began to draw up orders in preparation for St. Victor's arrival at night to announce Bonaparte's death. Louise troubled him with neither complaints nor questions, but merely observed that if Jacobin were not killed he would find his way home.

Meanwhile, Jacobin was following the steps of his old master. Great, indeed, was Pierre Maneheu's surprise when he suddenly saw his dog frisking round him as he rapidly made his way from the Galerie de Valois; the surprise was, however, agreeable, for he was much attached to his dog, and had frequently regretted losing him, though not so much as he regretted the farm that had been burnt down, and the wife that had disappeared. He felt as if some part of his property were restored to him, and Maneheu was much attached to any kind of property.

Without troubling himself to ask where Jacobin had sprung from, or how he had broken his leash, he at once removed the cord which he was dragging after him, patted him in token of welcome, and walked on, feeling sure that the mastiff would not again leave him. Pierre's mission had been simply to show himself, and now he was in haste to return to the inn, where George had come in person before daybreak, to order him to go and give the signal, and then return at once, as there would not be too much time to get the horses and arms ready. The First Consul was to pass that very night, between six and seven o'clock, along the Rueil road, just past the quarry which Cadoudal had chosen as the place of concealment for his little troop.

The news of this intended journey to Malmaison had been brought to the Chouan leader by his servant, Louis Picot, who, thanks to Liardot's information, had struck up an acquaintance with one of the ushers of Bonaparte's private apartments, and through him had learnt that the General was about to spend a week at Malmaison, and that his escort had orders to be ready the following evening at half-past five.

Manehou was accustomed to passive obedience, and knew that Cadoudal was awaiting his return with impatience, so he walked hastily along the Rue St. Honoré, after leaving the palace by one of the walks turning down to the Rue de Valois, which Liardot could not command as he passed the end of the Galerie. It was not till Pierre had got as far as the church of St. Roch that he noticed Jacobin turning round and growling, as he did when there was some one he was longing to fly at. This was not the moment to quarrel with any one, so Maneheu whistled Jacobin on, and the docile animal left off growling, and trotted on again steadily by his side.

Never having been in Paris till he was brought there by Cadoudal, Maneheu knew but one way of going between his tavern and the Palais-Royal; George had taught him this one evening, when he had rehearsed him, so to speak, in the way he was to show himself to the Chouans in the Galerie de Valois. Following this route, he had turned through some of the bye-streets into the Rue-Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and down the Rue Richelieu and Rue St. Honoré towards the Champs-Élysées, whilst Liardot was taking the opposite direction. He walked on to the Neuilly bridge, and thence to his tavern, at a rapid pace, occasionally elbowing his way past more leisurely passengers.

Of all the conspirators, Pierre Maneheu was perhaps the most anxious for a speedy issue to the plot. Ever since George had given him orders on the Biville moor to leave all and follow him, Pierre had obeyed his chief with reluctance. He was chafing at the bit, not daring to rebel, but cursing in his heart the orders he received without a murmur, and obeyed exactly, because he felt forced to do so. Cadoudal's landing had indeed deprived him of his farm and his wife, and might in the end cost him his life. The covetous and ambitious peasant, who had seen himself on the high road to wealth, could not well brook the ruin of all his hopes. He had heard nothing, moreover, of his wife since she had left him that evening for Penly Point, accompanied by the faithful Jacobin. Cadoudal and St. Victor had been persuaded by Liardot's advice from giving him any information. Liardot naturally thought that if either husband or wife learned the other's whereabouts, they would try to meet, and this might expose the cause to great dangers, owing to the spies that hovered about the house in the Rue des Prouvaires.

When Maneheu therefore again met his dog, he had no doubt but that the animal must have followed his mistress into the prison where she was probably detained, and he hoped that by his assistance he might find her again some day. For the present, however, he had enough to do in getting the horses and arms ready before sunset; if the enterprise failed, he had made up his mind to consider himself absolved from all obligations to his general, and intended to try to find and rescue Louise and then leave the country. He was not quite at George's mercy, as he had been prudent enough to turn some of his farm produce into money, which he always carried on his person, but for the present he remained with Cadoudal, that in case of the king's restoration to the throne, he might have a share in the royal favours.

As he walked on to Puteaux, Maneheu was therefore rehearsing in all good faith the simple part assigned to him by Cadoudal of taking charge of the tavern while the fighting was going on, and keeping a fresh horse in readiness for St. Victor to mount when he rode to Paris with news of the victory. By the time they had got half way down the Avenue de Neuilly, Jacobin again began to turn round and bark, and Maneheu noticed, for the first time, that these hostile manifestations seemed directed against an individual who was walking about twenty paces behind. This aroused his suspicions and made him scrutinize the man, but his appearance was so insignificant that he did not think it necessary to pay any further attention to him. Walking rapidly on, he crossed the bridge, and turning towards the left, down a faint track, began to strike across the vine-covered hill on whose summit, sheltered by a hollow, lay his modest tavern. He had quite forgotten the individual he had left behind him, and so, apparently, had Jacobin, when a voice suddenly called to him, and turning round, he saw the same man panting under his efforts to overtake him. This decided him to stop, and the dog, placing himself in front, snarled and showed his formidable teeth. The traveller came hobbling up, and raising his hat politely, while he wiped his forehead with a checked handkerchief, said :

"Excuse me, sir, for venturing to detain you, but necessity has no law, and in these solitudes, one is glad to find any one to speak to ; can you tell me whether this path leads to Mont Valérien ?"

"Certainly ; you see it before you," replied Maneheu, pointing to the hill which dominates the noted vineyards of Suresnes.

"Yes, I am aware that is the celebrated eminence, but I was afraid of losing myself on the way," replied the man humbly.

"This path will take you to it," said Maneheu, not over-graciously.

"Then pray allow me to walk with you."

"You can do so if you choose," muttered the Chouan, examining him more closely ; the man was certainly inoffensive in appearance and neatly dressed, so that Maneheu could not understand why Jacobin should have taken such an objection to him. As he did not care to waste any time in explanations, he continued to ascend the hill in the company of the stranger.

"You may think I am thrusting myself upon you rather unceremoniously," said the man, "and perhaps you will wonder what I am doing in these wilds. I have been attracted hither by the splendid view which Mont Valérien is said to command. My curiosity will seem natural enough when you hear that I live in the provinces, and that this is my first visit to Paris."

"I have no objection, I am sure," muttered Maneheu with an air of perfect indifference.

The provincial made no rejoinder, and the two men walked side by side in perfect silence, till a turn in the path brought them to the inn, when Maneheu said abruptly : "You have only to go straight before you. We part company here."

"A tavern !" exclaimed his companion, "what a welcome sight ! I am half dead with thirst, and hope you will come in with me and take a drop of something to drink."

"No, thank you, I am not thirsty," said Maneheu coldly. "Besides, you cannot help seeing that this tavern is deserted, for the doors and windows are all closed."

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the thirsty traveller, "I thought you were stopping here, or I should never have ventured—"

"I am not stopping, but taking the road to Nanterre, which turns

off to the right, while that to Mont Valérien lies to the left; so it is time we parted, and I must bid you good day."

"Many thanks for your kindness, sir. I regret that we cannot clink glasses together, but since there is no one in this tavern—and yet, if the house be closed, I think the stableyard seems open."

This was true. The door of a long wing adjoining the main building stood wide open, and talking and laughter might be heard from within. Mancheu had not perceived this at the first moment, and it vexed him, but he resolved to put a good face on the matter.

"I don't fancy the grooms will find you anything to drink," said he shrugging his shoulders. "This tavern is only frequented on Sundays, when Parisians come here to hire saddle-horses. This is Saturday and so the lads will be grooming their horses ready for to-morrow, but they have not the keys of the cellar, and the landlord is sure to have gone to do his marketing in Paris. I should know something about it, as I pass here nearly every day on my way from Nanterre. So if you will take my advice, you will push on to Suresnes, where there is some good claret to be had at the inn."

"I believe you are right, sir," said the stranger, who, while listening to his words, had turned inside the gate and taken a glance at the stables. "The men are busy, for they have at least twenty horses to groom, and I should be sorry to disturb them. So good-day to you, and many thanks for your information!" And with a polite bow, he passed forward along the road to Mont Valérien without ever looking back.

"I thought for an instant that he was a spy," murmured Mancheu, "but I see now that he was merely an idiot." And turning to the yard, he began to harangue the three Chouans who were grooming the horses for their imprudence in leaving the gate open, then, after giving a final glance along the Suresnes road, and seeing no one, he drew a key from his pocket and let himself into the house, followed by Jacobin, who was now perfectly quiet.

"Ah, so here you come!" said a sonorous voice which he knew perfectly, and as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the darkened room, he could see Cadoudal standing before a table, examining a cavalry sabre. "Well?" said the chief.

"Well, General, it is done," replied Mancheu.

"Were all our people at their posts, in the Palais-Royal?"

"I believe so, General. I do not know them all, but I saw St. Victor, Deville, Burban, and several others."

"And did they see you?"

"Yes, General. I only remained under the arcades for a minute or two as you told me, but I was able to see the stir produced by my appearance. Each man left the walk, and retired by the entrance nearest him."

"Very well. Was Fleur-de-Rose there?"

"That man you thought of shooting on the cliff?" asked Mancheu disdainfully. "I cannot say."

"Because you lost no time in looking about you, but he must have been there, and all will be right."

"I hope so, General, though just now—"

"What?"

"Oh, nothing. Only a man accosted me at the foot of the hill and seemed determined to stop here and refresh himself

"I suppose you told him to pass on?"

"Yes, General, and so he did. But our comrades had been foolish enough to leave the door of the stables open, and so the man could see the horses and saddles."

"That was vexatious," murmured George. "Still," added he, after a minute's consideration, "we should never achieve anything if we let trifles come in our way. The die is cast now. You must see that they are more careful for the future, and as our friends arrive, show them all into the stable, except St. Victor, who must come here. Have you plenty of provisions for them all?"

"Oh, be quite easy on that score, General. There is some bacon and bread for our men, and I tapped a cask of wine this morning."

"Pierre Maneheu, I am satisfied with you, and the king shall know that you have done your duty," said Cadoudal gravely. "But what is that dog doing there?" asked he, suddenly, as Jacobin came from behind his master.

"It is my dog, General. My wife had taken it to Penly Point, on the night when we were expecting you at Biville cleft, and the gendarmes captured it as well as her. I have found it to-day, but Louise has not returned," said Maneheu, bitterly.

"How and where did you find it?" asked Cadoudal.

"In the Palais-Royal, but how it came there, I can't say. It ran after me along the Galerie."

George was silent and seemed pondering over this strange encounter, but all at once his brow cleared. He remembered that Liardot had spoken of his walks with Jacobin, and felt convinced now that he had been in the gardens. He took care, however, not to let Maneheu into the secret of Jacobin's detention in the Rue des Prouvaires, till the triumph of the royalist party was secured.

"Now go and look after the preparations, my good fellow," said he. "They must all be mounted by six o'clock, and I trust to you to see them all properly armed. Don't forget to send St. Victor to me as soon as he arrives."

Maneheu bowed and passed out with Jacobin at his heels, and as soon as George was left alone, he began to pace up and down the room, conscious that he was about to risk all on his venture that night, and that if Bonaparte escaped, only Austrian or Russian cannon could henceforth clear the king's way to his throne. The friends of monarchy might, indeed, as a last resource, come to an understanding with such malcontent generals as Moreau and Pichegru, and foment a military sedition, but Cadoudal was a good judge of men and knew the ascendancy of these second-rate commanders would weigh little in the balance against that of the victor of Marengo. Immediate success was essential to his cause, and in order to obtain it, Cadoudal did not shrink from an ambush more worthy of a highwayman than a soldier. Now, when alone with his conscience on the eve of the decisive moment, did he feel a presentiment that the step would leave a blot on his memory, and did the wrinkles on his manly countenance betray a touch of remorse? God alone, who reads every heart, can answer that question. George, however, remained sombre and pensive till his lieutenant appeared.

"So the great day, the glorious day, has arrived at last!" exclaimed St. Victor, tossing his cap in the air. "When I at last caught sight of Maneheu's face in the Galerie de Valois, I felt ready to cut capers under the trees in those gardens!"

"It is well you are in such high spirits," said George.

"How can I fail to be, when we are so close to the goal? By this evening, Bonaparte will have departed this life, and to-morrow morning the white flag will be floating from the Tuileries to tell the worthy Parisians of the happiness that has befallen them while asleep. You will see, General, how easily they can accommodate themselves to a change of circumstances. They have varied their form of government so frequently within the last dozen years that they have grown quite used to transitions."

"This one will be somewhat abrupt," returned Cadoudal smiling, "but I have several questions to ask you. To begin with, were all our men at the Palais-Royal? Did they notice Maneheu, and at once move off?"

"Yes, all of them, General. Many have already arrived, and are at work in the stables under Maneheu's directions. I have not seen Malabry, but I heard Tamerlane holding forth both in prose and verse."

"Very good. I suppose you would also see our friend Liardot in the gardens?"

"Certainly. He was sitting at the top of the walk, holding a fine dog in a leash, and talking to an objectionable-looking individual, who was probably one of Fouché's agents. Of course he is compelled to consort with such people, though I could perceive that he was longing to get rid of the fellow."

"Yes," murmured Cadoudal, "I know that Liardot will not betray us, but he has been the involuntary cause of a vexatious incident. The dog you saw caught scent of his master, and made his escape to follow him."

"You don't say so! That may easily interfere with the arrangements made for keeping the husband and wife apart."

"Up to this moment, Maneheu still believes his wife to be in prison, for he did not see Liardot in the garden, and does not know the dog was with him."

"That is well. Besides, why should we disturb ourselves when Bonaparte is so near his end? In a few hours, we shall either be victorious, or—"

"Or dead," said George in his sonorous tones. "For my part, I shall be satisfied to die for my king."

"So should I, General. But we cannot always choose our lot, and at our age, there is some excuse for clinging to life, especially when we are in love."

"Are you then in love?"

"What is the good of concealing it? Yes, I am seriously in love for the first time in my life, and only await our triumph to marry, though I am aware it will be a *mésalliance*."

"Marry! Are you thinking of marrying?"

"Yes, indeed, and since I have this opportunity of telling you all, you must know—"

"I don't wish to know anything," said Cadoudal, interrupting him. "A day of battle is not the time for listening to a lover's confidences. I have no more than is necessary for giving you my instructions."

"Quite right, General," said St. Victor, instantly changing his tone. "I await your orders."

"Then listen," began George. "I have precise information through my brave Picot. Bonaparte is to leave the Tuileries towards six o'clock, in an open barouche, escorted by a small body of picked men. He will, therefore, be passing close to our ambuscade a little before seven, just as night is approaching, but while it is still twilight. We must provide against

accidents, so I have decided that instead of rushing blindly upon the troop, we will wait to attack it till we receive the signal from an outpost, placed where he can command the arrival of the carriage and escort, while I remain in the quarry, ready to charge at the head of our men as soon as the sentinel lets me know it is time."

"That seems to me an admirable arrangement. Supposing there were any change in the programme, as, for instance, if Bonaparte's escort were to be tripled, the outpost would not give the signal, and you would escape the useless risk of being overwhelmed by a superiority of numbers."

"That is what I thought, though I must own it costs me to let this chance slip through fear of a few extra men. If the gendarmes were thirty instead of twenty, I should not hesitate to confront them."

"Nor I, General. But the outpost must be a man with a cool head and a quick eye, and used to his business. If the signal were given a few seconds too soon or too late, it might ruin all."

"So I think, and because the mission is such a delicate one, I am about to entrust it to you."

"To me, General! It is a great honour, yet I should prefer taking my part in the sword-thrusts."

"So you shall. Make your mind at ease on that score. You know the rising ground above the quarry which skirts the Rueil road. There is a hillock on the summit which commands the cross-roads at Courbevoie; station yourself there on horseback, choose the moment, and when you think we can fall on them to the best advantage, fire your pistol in the air. I shall charge instantly with our men, and there will be nothing to prevent your joining us."

"Thank you, General," said St. Victor, joyously, "and now I have but one more question to ask. Which of us is to strike Bonaparte?"

"What does it matter?"

"Only—I feel some embarrassment in confessing it—but I do not feel as if I should have courage to kill him."

"And do you imagine that I wish to lift my hand against him? I hate him as an obstacle in our path, but he has led the French to victory, and I wish him to fall in the struggle, like a flag brought down by a bullet; I wish him to fall by the hands of a party, not by those of a man, and that none of us may know who struck the blow."

"General," exclaimed St. Victor, "I never understood better how worthy you are to command His Majesty's soldiers. And now I am ready for action."

"We have at least three hours at our disposal," said Cadondal, who was never calmer than when on the eve of an engagement; "it is time, however, for you to go and look after the men. I will join you later on."

And, with a wave of his hand, George dismissed his lieutenant, who could scarce contain himself for joy on thinking that, by to-morrow, he might be free to proclaim his love for the girl, whom, for two long weeks, he had been forced to adore in secret.

Since the strange adventure which had brought him face to face with Major Robert, St. Victor had heard nothing of Gabrielle. He was conscious, however, that his love for her, and even their midnight meetings, could be no secret to the officer, since the latter had overheard his conversation with Malabry. He knew, too, that his antagonist must be making every effort in his power to seize him and send him before a military tribunal, so that he was risking his life every time that he appeared in the

Palais-Royal gardens, or even in the streets. He longed to see Gabrielle again, as he imagined all she must be enduring on his account, but he was courageous enough to shut himself up in his lodgings while waiting for the day which he hoped might clear every obstacle from their path by inaugurating a change of government. He felt singularly light-hearted now that the trial of his patience had come to an end, and he whistled a merry hunting-song as he entered the stable-yard.

All the Chouans had arrived, Malabry last of all. Having come by St. Cloud, the Hercules had been unable to resist the attractions of the fair, and had been somewhat delayed by wrestling with a bear, which he had vanquished amid the plaudits of the audience. His leader, fortunately, put no questions as to the cause of his tardy appearance. Maneheu, having learnt prudence, had placed four sentinels in different directions to give warning of the approach of a stranger, but none appeared, for, in those days, there was no fort on Mont Valérien, and the neighbourhood was very quiet.

St. Victor spent the remainder of the day in looking carefully after every detail of the preparations; he selected the two best horses in the stable for his own use, one a strongly built animal, which he meant to use for charging Bonaparte's escort, and the other a well-bred mare, able to carry him nine miles in forty minutes, which he kept in reserve for carrying the tidings to Paris.

By half-past five, every one was ready, and George appeared in uniform. He looked magnificent with his great sword hanging from his white sash, and the wide-brimmed Breton hat on his colossal leonine head slouched over his eyes. He held a brief final consultation with his lieutenant in the presence of the assembled Chouans, addressed a few energetic words of encouragement to the men, and then ordered them off to the quarry by couples, to avoid attracting the attention of any one who might happen to be passing along the road. The order was promptly executed, and in ten minutes, no one was left in the stables but Cadoudal, St. Victor, and Maneheu. The latter was to keep the house.

St. Victor and George went out together, and soon separated, St. Victor occupying the important and perilous post which had been assigned to him by Cadoudal.

IX.

THE mission with which St. Victor had been entrusted was indeed one of the utmost delicacy. Daylight was waning, for six o'clock had struck, and the sun had already set behind the hill of St. Germain. He was not to lose sight of the Paris road for an instant, and though he might not have long to wait, night was at hand, and if it favoured a surprise, it might also occasion confusion in the attack, and uncertainty in the choice of the favourable moment. St. Victor ardently hoped that the First Consul's carriage would not be long in making its appearance, and as the mound on which he was to keep watch was only a heap of sand and gravel thrown up from the quarry, he took advantage of one of the miniature ravines by which it was intersected to station himself where he and his horse would be partially concealed, while commanding the whole sweep of the road towards Nanterre and Rueil.

The ground was very advantageous for his purpose. The First Consul

and his escort were likely to come slowly up the steep bit of road between Neuilly bridge and the cross-roads, and appear on the summit like a vessel emerging on the horizon, so all the observer had to do was to keep his eye on that point, when, however rapidly the carriage might descend, he would certainly have time to reconnoitre the force of the escort.

For the present the solitude and silence were unbroken, save for the *Angelus* ringing from the belfry at Nanterre. St. Victor passed the time of waiting in thinking of Gabrielle, and the pleasure he should have in presenting himself to her in the uniform of a colonel of the new army, George having promised him that rank in the name of the French princes who directed the conspiracy from London, while their bold followers risked their lives on the spot. The young Chouan anticipated the pleasure of protecting Gabrielle's brother, and converting him to the royalist cause as he asked him for the hand of his sister, never thinking that a devoted follower of General Bonaparte's would rather lose his life, ten times over, than see the Count of Provence on the throne, and have a Chouan for his brother-in-law!

Still, however unreasoning the young man might be, he justified his General's confidence by perfect attention to his post, and sat motionless on his saddle, with eye and ear alert. He had been waiting thus for nearly twenty minutes when he heard a sound of wheels in the distance; it came from the direction of Rueil, and bore no resemblance to the rapid pace of a private carriage. It was a peculiar noise, not unlike the clattering of a tin saucepan fastened to a dog's tail, and yet St. Victor fancied he had heard something not unlike it before. He soon found that he was right on seeing a lumbering vehicle turn the corner, drawn by a horse not unlike the wretched animal which had conveyed himself, Gabrielle, and Malabry to Malmaison on the night of the ball at Tivoli. Still, as all these public conveyances were much alike in colour and form, he would have taken no further notice of the huge vehicle, which looked in the distance like a gourd mounted on wheels, had it not suddenly stopped just before the mound where he was hoping to escape notice in his corner. The driver, however, rose to his feet, and put his hand to shade his eyes in order to see better. There was still light enough to enable St. Victor to recognise at once the abominable *Sans-Culotte* who had once driven him along that road, and the man must on his side have recognised the passenger who had paid him so liberally, for he shouted out: "Hi! Citizen! do you want a ride to Paris? I will take you cheaper to-day."

The lieutenant turned pale with rage, but made no reply. The man however did not pass on, but putting both hands to his mouth so as to form a speaking trumpet, cried in a mocking tone: "Is it because you are waiting for your sweetheart from Malmaison that you stand there like a statue?"

St. Victor put his hand to his saddle-bow to feel for his pistol, but fortunately remembered in time that a shot would be taken by his friends for a signal, so he dropped his arm and waited quietly.

"What, aristocrat," resumed the terrible driver, "have they cut out your tongue before the time has come for beheading you? Have you any commissions to give me in Paris? What, none? Well, I am on my way there, and if I happen to meet your lady, I will tell her you are waiting under an elm-tree."

And accentuating his words by a hoarse laugh, the driver raised his arm to whip up his sorry beast, just as two horsemen appeared on the summit of

the Courbevoie road, coming from Paris. St. Victor caught sight of them instantly, as their figures stood out against the evening sky. He felt sure these were the outriders, and that within ten minutes the First Consul's carriage would be within reach of the ambuscade, but the public conveyance was still in the way.

The driver had evidently caught sight of the horsemen too, and recognised the uniform of the Consular Guard, for instead of urging on his horse, he began to scream all the louder: "You seem to be waiting for her indeed—here come Bonaparte and his wife—she must be in the carriage with them—enjoy yourself while you can, Chouan—one of these fine days the *Sans-Culottes* will have the upper hand again, and you and your lady and Bonaparte too will all come to the guillotine." And with this sinister prediction, the man forced his mare into a trot.

"Villain!" murmured St. Victor to himself, strangely agitated by this unlooked-for incident, and asking himself whether the man were simply an insolent blackguard, or an actual spy in disguise. He had little time to revolve such questions, for the two outriders were approaching, and the carriage soon came into sight, so St. Victor prepared for action. All was quiet in the quarry, only the occasional snorting of a horse, or the clank of a sheath, reminding him of the presence of the Chouans, who seemed to have been undisturbed by the shouts of the *Sans-Culotte*. The carriage was beginning to roll down the hill, within a hundred paces of the outriders, but the body of the escort was not yet visible. This delay surprised the lieutenant, but he supposed that the carriage had outstripped the horsemen, who would probably soon overtake it in descending the hill.

This explanation was necessary to satisfy his mind, for the idea of charging Bonaparte when he was unprotected would have been as repugnant to him as an actual assassination. Civil warfare had led St. Victor, like Cadoudal, to form a code of morality of his own, and he had scruples as to whether he should give the signal, if the First Consul were to pass the ambuscade accompanied only by the two or three officers seated in his carriage.

His ideas were, however, diverted into another channel, when he saw the two outriders press forward and pass the mound in front of the quarry, while the carriage stopped on meeting the *Sans-Culotte's* vehicle, apparently to exchange some words with the driver. For an instant St. Victor feared the man was cautioning them against him, but in another minute or two the Consul's carriage began to advance again at the same steady pace, while a black dot appeared on the horizon which could be nothing but the tardy escort. This removed St. Victor's scruples, and he concentrated his whole attention on the carriage; he could see now that it was open, and that there was some one on the box beside the coachman, and only two persons inside. As it approached still nearer, he cocked his pistol; the curve of the road prevented him from commanding the actual occupants, but he could see that the man on the box was not a footman, as he had at first supposed, but some one wearing a long coat and a wide brimmed hat slouched over his eyes. A suspicion instantly flashed across St. Victor that this man might be an agent of Fouché's, and that it was he who had stopped the carriage to question the *Sans-Culotte*. The next thing he could descry was a woman seated in the carriage, whom he supposed to be Bonaparte's wife, and he asked himself what was to be done under such perplexing circumstances, for George would never wish to run the risk of killing an innocent woman.

Another minute added to his surprise by showing that the man seated by her side was not the First Consul, for he wore the ordinary civilian's hat, which General Bonaparte never condescended to adopt. "We have been betrayed," muttered the lieutenant between his teeth. "Bonaparte has remained at the Tuileries, and sent us some gendarmes in disguise. All is lost."

But there was yet another surprise in store for him. Just as the carriage passed the ambuscade, the man rose and leaned over in his direction to get a better view. It was Major Robert, and the woman by his side was—Gabrielle!

Gabrielle must have recognised him too, for she gave a shriek of terror, and at the same moment the coachman pulled up and the officer alighted nimbly, in spite of his sister's efforts to detain him.

"Drive on, now," said François Robert, and the young girl, who had sunk back half fainting, was borne away like a vision. "Forward!" cried the Major to the troop who were advancing at full speed.

There are critical moments when we seem to possess a dual existence, and St. Victor, though cut to the heart by seeing Gabrielle appear, did not lose his head. He plunged his spurs into his horse's flanks, and the animal made a great leap forward, then, turning suddenly to the left, he fell like a bomb into the midst of the Chouans assembled behind the mound.

"We are betrayed," said he rapidly to George, who was at their head. "Bonaparte is not in the carriage. An officer of the picked gendarmes has taken his place, and the horsemen of the Consular Guard are at hand. Fly, General, fly, while I dart along the high road to try to draw them away."

Any other leader might have lost time in asking for explanations, but Cadoudal knew how to be prompt. "Dismount, my lads," said he instantly; "throw down your sabres and leave your horses here. Disperse as quickly as possible in different directions. Every man for himself, and to your homes till you receive further orders. I am going to the inn to give Maneheu warning."

His commands were half executed before he had finished speaking, and the Chouans dispersing in every direction except the high road. The gathering twilight enabled them soon to vanish among the broken ground bordering on the quarry. "Away, my son, and sacrifice yourself, if necessary, to give us time to make our escape on foot," said George, who had also left the saddle.

"I am off, General," said St. Victor simply, as he spurred his horse forward. In three leaps he was back on the road, just as the escort, which had halted for a few seconds to give the Major a mount, was about to rush somewhat blindly in pursuit of an invisible enemy.

"God save the King!" shouted the lieutenant at the top of his voice, as he dashed on towards Rueil. The men, as he had foreseen, were deceived by the insolent exclamation which resembled a challenge, and dashed after the fugitive. François Robert, indeed, had a suspicion that the majority of rebels were trying to escape in a different direction, and for an instant he tried to rally his men, but the impetus had carried them away. Besides, he thought it all-important to seize the leader, and he felt convinced that the man before him was either Valréas, his own particular enemy, or else Cadoudal himself, so he placed himself at the head of the troop.

St. Victor was only thirty paces ahead to begin with, and he knew that his horse had more staying power than speed, so he regretted the thorough-

bred still kept in reserve for him by Maneheu. Still, he was an excellent rider, and hoped to distance his pursuers till he could contrive to elude them ; unfortunately the country before him was a dead level, and there was not even a plantation or thicket by the roadside. On he fled, through the deserted street of Rueil, and reached the park-wall of Malmaison without allowing the gendarmes to gain upon him. The First Consul's coachman must have driven at full speed and made his way to the residence through the open gate, and George's lieutenant was thanking Heaven for sparing him another meeting with Gabrielle, since she had proved false to him by abetting her brother's designs, when he suddenly caught sight of two horsemen, stationed in the very centre of the road, as if to intercept him.

These two men could be none other than the outriders who had just been galloping in advance of the carriage, and his only chance was to ride past them in the darkness, as the road was wide. He took the bridle in his teeth, a pistol in his left hand and his sword in his right, and dug his spurs into his horse's flanks. He heard a voice from behind crying, "Shoot at the horse !" and the sound of hoofs tearing after him. The two horsemen fell back on either side, evidently intending to catch him between two fires. St. Victor grasped the danger, and guiding his horse with his knees, suddenly darted to the left, charging head foremost into the man who was preparing to fire a side shot at him. This manœuvre was so sudden that the man had no time to defend himself and received a blow on his knee from the charge, and a pistol-shot in his face. The other came up just as his comrade was reeling in the saddle, and he did his best to blow out St. Victor's brains, but the young Cheuan ducked his head, and the bullet whistled over it. At the same moment, he made a thrust with his sword, which entered the horseman's chest and brought him prostrate to the ground.

All this was accomplished more quickly than it can be described, and the Major's troop had only gained five lengths, before St. Victor had cleared the bodies and was off again. Both he and his mare escaped without a scratch, and the animal seemed entering into the situation, and about to display qualities which had remained in reserve till she became thoroughly warmed. St. Victor was beginning no longer to regret the thorough-bred, which would have been less likely to hold out, as he realized the pitiless chase that would continue till either man or horse succumbed. The Major seemed resolved to take his enemy alive, he thought, as the escort had not fired, when suddenly a bullet whizzed past him without striking his horse. The darkness made it difficult to aim, especially at a moving object. When once the park-wall was passed, the road became much narrower, lying between the hillside and the Seine, whose waters, flowing to the right, drew nearer and nearer to the road. The wooded slopes now before him made St. Victor think seriously of trying to diverge from the highway, but he knew too little of the country to venture to strike along any unknown path from which he might find no outlet, so he told himself that he must press on and on, till some unforeseen incident might come to his aid. Four or five of the horsemen behind had already given in, their horses having sunk under them, but the rest continued at the same impetuous gallop, excited by the voice of the officer and the spirit of the charge. It was evident that the Major was prepared to continue the chase himself, if all his men sank by the way.

St. Victor told himself that if they met face to face, he would let himself be killed rather than violate his vow to Gabrielle, but he wished to avoid

the encounter, so on he rode. After passing the heights of La Jonchère, he saw lights before him, and remembered that a village called Bougival lay on the way, which was much frequented during the summer, and would probably be full of Parisians on a Saturday night. His forebodings were realised; in front of the last house, which was a tavern, the road was blocked by a number of merry-makers, walking arm in arm, and shouting the refrain of a drinking-song. St. Victor dashed straight into them like a whirlwind, knocking over two or three in his course. Unfortunately, as he crossed the piece of road illuminated by the lights from the tavern-windows, he presented a better mark to his pursuers; two or three shots were fired, and he felt a sharp twinge of pain in his left shoulder, while at the same moment his horse faltered.

Two bullets had reached their destination. St. Victor felt that he was lost, not on account of his own wound, but because the mare was evidently ready to break down. It was only by plying her well with the spur and holding her head up that he could still make her go. He could hear the snorting of the gendarmes' horses just behind, while his own was exhausted. A thick hedge of quicks prevented his diverging to the left, while below, on his right, lay the bed of the river, from which he was parted only by a steep and narrow bank.

"Surrender, Chouan!" cried a voice which he recognised perfectly as that of François Robert. He gave one last thought to Gabrielle, and then, mentally invoking the Providence that watches over the feeble, gave a violent jerk to the bit, which forced the mare to turn aside and rear, when, pressing both legs against her flanks, he made her leap into the Seine.

He was just in time. The horsemen were upon him, and the Major, who kept still in advance, had all but touched him with the point of his sword. "Halt!" cried the officer, suddenly. The soldiers obeyed as best they could, while he had great difficulty in reining back his own horse. As soon as he had it under control, he jumped off and ran down to the river brink, but all that was to be seen was the swift black stream.

"It is not worth your while to be looking, Major," said the quartermaster, who was in command of the troop. "I know the place, for I was born at Chatou. The force of the stream is immense here, and Marly Mill is not a hundred yards below. If the Chouan has leaped in, he must be drowned already, or, even if not, the wheels of the mill, which the First Consul has just had repaired, will soon grind him to mince-meat."

François Robert stood gloomily pondering, as he gazed on the current. Then he suddenly sprang into his saddle again and cried: "Face about, my men! This fellow has escaped us, but he was not alone. Let us try if we can catch the others."

X.

IN the year 1803, the Minister of Police was installed in a handsome palace on the Quai Voltaire, not far from that which, in the days of the Directory, had witnessed the magnificence of Liardot the contractor. Fouché, who was always scheming how to regain his portfolio, had established himself on the same quay, possibly in order to be on the spot whenever the First Consul should reinstate him at the head of his police. From his windows he was able to keep an eye on the movements of his successor in office, and only waited for him to make some mistake, while he himself investigated

every plot and conspiracy in order to be able to prove, by some brilliant capture, that no one else was capable of watching over the safety of the head of the government.

The man was a combination of the monk, statesman, and lackey, one of the most singular figures of the early part of our century. Bonaparte used him, but never either liked or respected him; still, Fouché had managed to regain some of his favour by discovering the real authors of the Infernal Machine, and now, by dint of investigations and a comparison of the reports furnished by his foreign emissaries with those of his spies in Paris, he had ascertained that George Cadoudal was organising some great plot, and that if the Chouan general were not already in France, he would be coming soon. It was he who had sent Liardot down to Biville, and we know that it was entirely owing to the former contractor, who still contrived to dupe his employer, and to Louise Maneheu, that the great leader had escaped on that occasion.

On the day after that which had been so disastrous for St. Victor, the former minister was giving an early audience in his private office to an obscure agent, none other than Caillotte, whom Liardot had been so unlucky as to meet in the Palais Royal gardens. Fouché was seated at his desk in a dressing-gown, with a silk handkerchief twisted round his head, chewing the end of a quill, and stroking with his dry hand the sphinx-head which formed the ornament of his chair. His pale face never betrayed anything, its habitual expression was sinister, and if his eye occasionally gave a cold flash, it was always to question, never to reply.

Caillotte stood before him with a humble but unembarrassed manner, like a soldier about to give his report; he had only just arrived, and was waiting to be questioned.

"Begin at the beginning," said Fouché, in a voice as expressionless as his eyes. "Who put you on the track?"

"A dog, my lord," replied Caillotte, who knew the title never displeased the simple citizen Fouché.

"Good. That Chouan woman's dog?"

"Your lordship guesses everything. I fell in with Sourdat at the Palais Royal, holding the animal in a leash, and sitting on a chair, reading his paper. While we were chatting, the dog made his escape, and ran after a man who had shown himself for an instant under the arcades of the Galerie de Valois. I took leave of my comrade and followed it."

"Very well. What did Sourdat do?"

"He left the gardens and probably went home."

"Without troubling himself about the dog?"

"Yes, my lord, at least so far as I know, for I never turned to see. The dog gave me the clue to the man and I followed him."

"What was this man like?"

"Medium height, square-shouldered, about forty or fifty, bony, sunburnt, just the figure of a Chouan."

"And did the dog recognise him?"

"They caressed each other like old friends. The man struck along the Champs-Élysées and down the Avenue de Neuilly, crossed the bridge, and turned to the left by a path leading through the vineyards above Puteaux. Then I accosted him."

"That was a mistake."

"Excuse me, my lord. If I had continued to follow without speaking, he would have noticed me and suspected something, whereas, by asking

my way, I passed for a stranger going up to Mont Valérien for the sake of the view."

"You may think so, but these Chouans are shrewd. Go on."

"We reached an inn bearing the sign of the *Chant du Coq*, which looked suspicious at the first glance, and there he told me he was going forward to Nanterre and that I must go straight on. I did so at once, for I had little doubt he would blow my brains out, if I hesitated for a second. I could see the shape of something like a pistol in each of his pockets, so on I went, but keeping my eyes and ears open."

"What did you see?"

"Three men grooming their horses before the door of an open stable where about fifteen fine animals were fastened to the rack, and as many saddles hung up. Then I understood it all, especially as I threw myself flat on the ground two hundred yards off behind a heap of stones, and heard the man talking to the grooms instead of going on to Nanterre."

"And hence you concluded—"

"That this inn was the Chouans' rendezvous, that they were making preparations for attacking the First Consul, and that the attempt would probably be made on the road to Malmaison, where the First Consul was expected yesterday."

"And what did you do next? Come to the point."

"I returned to Paris, my lord."

"Quite right. But how was it you did not come to me at once?" asked Fouché, fixing his Medusa eyes on Caillotte, who, being accustomed to sustain the sharp glance without flinching, replied: "My lord, when I parted from that man, it was three o'clock. I ran as fast as I could, but was obliged to go round by St. Cloud in hopes of finding a carriage; as you know, we are always at the mercy of accidents, and I could get no conveyance of any sort, so I lost three quarters of an hour in hunting up an upholsterer, whose master consented to drive me back to Paris for twenty francs."

"You ought to have driven straight to the Quai Voltaire," said Fouché, interrupting him.

"My lord," rejoined the agent, "pray consider the time. When I passed the Barrière des Bons-hommes, it was five o'clock, and I knew that at six, the First Consul was to start for Malmaison, so I had barely an hour to warn the General, and I felt sure your Excellency would excuse my going there first, for fear lest I should arrive too late."

This was the first time that Caillotte had addressed the converted Jacobin as your Excellency, and Fouché could not be angry with a subaltern who treated him like one of the ministers of the *Ancien Régime*, for he had an especial weakness for titles. "You might at least have called here after going to the Tuileries," murmured he.

"So I certainly should have done," said Caillotte, "had not I spent all the night in collecting the details of the report which I have now the honour of submitting to your lordship."

"Well. Then give me the facts, and nothing but the facts."

"It is a long story, my lord, but I will try to condense it. To begin with, I lost at least ten minutes on reaching the Tuileries, through the stupid doorkeepers, who might never have let me in at all had not chance brought Major Robert to the foot of the grand staircase."

"What! The man who had charge of that unlucky expedition to Biville?"

"The same, my lord. I happened to know him, so he gave me a hearing, and then told me to stay where I was, while he went to see the First Consul and tried to persuade him not to start. Major Robert is an officer of great intelligence."

"Never mind your opinion," said Fouché, drily.

"I beg your pardon, my lord, it shall not happen again. I was kept waiting there in the castle-yard, and the General's carriage was standing all ready in the Cour du Carrousel, the mounted escort was there, only waiting for the First Consul and his wife to come. I trembled when I thought that if the gendarme officer could not get a hearing, the great man who presides over the destinies of France might be rushing to destruction."

"Then you are very fond of the great man who—how did you turn it?" asked Fouché, ironically.

"Almost as fond as you are, my lord."

"So Robert prevailed on him to remain, did he?" resumed the ex-monk, contented apparently with this equivocal answer.

"Not without difficulty, for I was kept a long time at the foot of the stairs, but at last the Major came down with his sister, a charming creature, on his arm, and he drew me aside, and said: 'We are going to Malmaison, accompanied by the escort. I have prevailed upon the First Consul to sleep at the Tuileries to-night, and let me take his place. You are to mount the box, by the coachman's side. If you are afraid of a gunshot, it will be the worse for you.'"

"And did you obey?"

"You know, my lord, that I am not afraid of death. But I had my objections. It seemed to me that it would have been wiser to send one or two squadrons to surround these Chouans, and a detachment of agents to track them if they absconded; but the Major would not hear of it; these military men are terrible."

"Terribly stupid, you mean," sneered Fouché. "This man is one of the most intelligent I know, and yet in Normandy, he made nothing but mistakes."

"He made more last night," resumed the agent. "At twenty minutes past six we reached Neuilly bridge; the carriage went at an awful rate, and it was all the mounted horsemen could do to follow us. Being on the box, I had little opportunity of talking with the Major, but when we reached the hill before coming to the cross-roads, I ventured to turn round and suggest, that if the Chouans saw no escort, they would certainly not attack the carriage, as they would not believe that Bonaparte was in it. The Major then ordered the coachman to drive rather more slowly, and the quarter-master, who was in command of the troops, to send two horsemen to ride a hundred yards in front. The rest of the men were to follow at a moderate distance."

"Very fairly planned. How did you manage to repair the gendarme's hot-headed carelessness?"

"Oh, chance came to my aid in revealing the part of the road where we had to be on our guard. We were so lucky as to meet the driver of a public conveyance, who stopped on purpose to tell us that he had seen a man on horseback about two hundred yards off, who seemed to be watching by the roadside. I calculated at once that this must be about the same level as the *Chant du Coq*, and made sure this man was the sentinel of the Chouans."

"What did the Major say to this?"

"He shouted to the coachman to drive on; he was tremendously excited, and seemed in a dreadful hurry to get to the spot, though I can't say as much of his sister."

"Did you take the name of that driver?"

"My lord, the officer would not give me time."

"Another mistake. That man must be found to-day. Proceed."

"We drove on at full speed, but the outriders had got out of sight, while the escort were gaining hard upon us. In five minutes we were passing a sort of gravel heap, which seemed to me to mask some deserted pit, and there, standing in a recess like the mounted guards at the Tuileries, appeared the sentry. It was still light enough to see him clearly."

"Then you could give an accurate description of him?"

"Very nearly. He is tall, rather slim, and apparently young. A handsome fellow enough. The officer may be able to tell you more about him, for he seemed to recognise him."

"What nonsense are you talking now?"

"Anything but nonsense, as you will find, my lord. I fancy the Major's sister knows the handsome Chouan, too, for she screamed when she saw him, and all but fainted."

"How can you account for such a singular recognition?"

"My lord, I could not presume to account for it, but I have heard of an apparition which frightened the Malmaison household about a fortnight ago."

"Yes, the Black Leg."

"Just so. It has ceased to appear, and as I am no believer in ghosts, I always fancied there was some love adventure in question. Now, Mademoiselle Robert resides at Malmaison throughout the summer, as reader to Madame Josephine Bonaparte."

Fouché made a sign to the agent to hold his tongue, while he made a note in his memorandum-book. "We must look into this," resumed he.

"If I might venture to suggest it," insinuated Caillotte, "the First Consul wishes the matter hushed up. There was a sergeant strangled in the park under the very nose of the patrols. It is a bad example, and the General does not care to have it talked about. Besides, the phantom has never been seen again."

"Very well. You said the sister nearly fainted. What did the brother do?"

"Oh, he never hesitated, but ordered the coachman to pull up, and leaped out, without paying any attention to the young lady. The vanguard were just at our heels, and the officer cried, 'Drive on!' The coachman did not wait for the order to be repeated, for he had no wish to be mixed up in the fray."

"And did you sit still?"

"There was no time for me to alight; besides, I thought I should be more useful where I was. We reached Malmaison in less than ten minutes, and there I found our two fools of outriders awaiting us before the main gates. I ventured to order them to place themselves upon the road, and stop any one who might try to pass. Then I saw the young lady into the house; I am always on my guard against impressionable women, and feared lest some fine feeling of generosity should lead this one to meddle with our affairs. Fortunately, a respectable lady was there at the door to receive her."

"Proceed," said Fouché, curtly.

"By the time I got back to the gate," resumed the agent, "I found that the guard had rushed to arms, too late, as usual, and two horsemen lay on the high-road, one shot dead on the spot, and the other in a hopeless condition. They had been floored by a Chouan who was fleeing, pursued by our officer and his troop."

"A single Chouan?"

"The one who had been posted as sentry. The Major pursued him without giving a thought to the others. I was about to run after him, when I met him and his soldiers riding back at full speed."

"Had the Chouan escaped?"

"The Chouan, being closely pressed, had leaped into the stream with his horse. So I learned from the officer, when he condescended to stop and consult me."

"I hope that the fugitive was, at any rate, drowned?"

"I, for my part, fear that such is the case. If he had been taken alive, he might have made some revelations, but the Seine is very swift and deep at the spot where he leaped in. Besides, he must have been severely wounded, for the road was covered with blood-stains. Everything seems to point to his death. But I shall go to Bougival myself to-day to superintend inquiries. There may be some important papers found on the corpse when it is fished up."

"If ever it is. These Chouans die hard. Tell me about the others."

"My lord, I prevailed on the officer to let one of his men take me up behind him, and so I galloped on with the detachment to the mound where we had surprised the sentinel. We went behind it, and found, as I had thought, a large pit, quite capable of concealing a body of armed men. The Chouans had fled, but, strange to say, they had left their horses behind!"

"But why should they have left them, just when they needed them most to effect their escape?"

"Because it is more difficult to escape, and, above all, to lie concealed, on horseback than on foot. A horseman at full gallop attracts attention, whereas a man on foot is scarcely noticed. Besides, these rascals had nowhere to take their animals."

"Well, nevertheless, I am astonished that they had the presence of mind to alter their plans so promptly; it betokens the presence of a skilful leader. But what did you do with the horses?"

"I, or rather the Major, acting by my advice, entrusted them to four of his men. They were saddled and bridled; there were pistols in the saddle-bows, and belted swords lying on the ground. Of course, Major Robert sent all these spoils to Paris, and the nineteen horses are now in the Tuileries stables."

"They should have been brought here," said Fouché impatiently.

"My lord, it did not rest with me. But I can easily see them, and find out from whom and by whom they were purchased. You may remember how much I discovered from one of the shoes of the horse that drew the Infernal Machine."

"I had forgotten, but it shall be remembered on the day when you earn a reward by laying your hand on these fellows. Now tell me about the inn, for I suppose you went there as soon as you came out of the quarry."

"I did indeed, my lord," replied Caillotte, excited by the hopes held out to him by his chief, "and there again, I could detect a masterhand."

Instead of taking refuge there, the Chouans had disappeared, only leaving behind them two horses not saddled for battle, and better than the other animals, probably because they were destined to convey tidings to Paris of the First Consul's death."

Fouché made an approving grimace, he was charmed with the sagacity of his subaltern.

"Never mind any further details. I must know by to-night who this house belongs to. Did Major Robert return with you?"

"No. He entrusted the horses to a quarter-master in command of the troop, and returned to Malmaison, merely ordering me to present myself at the Tuileries in the morning."

"I shall probably be seeing him to-day," murmured Fouché, becoming absorbed in reflections which presently resulted in the exclamation. "That Major is an ass!"

"You are severe, my lord, and if I might venture to give an opinion, the Major seemed to have some cause of personal resentment against the man he chose to follow. His sister's pathetic countenance confirmed my conjecture."

"You may have made a shrewd guess," said Fouché, after a brief silence. "Do you see this might furnish some clue, eh?"

"So I thought, my lord. If the young Chouan is not at the bottom of the Seine, the two lovers will probably try to meet, and so, by keeping an eye on Mademoiselle Robert—"

"Act as if he were alive, and furnish me with a daily report of the lady's movements. Contrive this without allowing that brute of a brother to get scent of it. And now let me hear what became of the dog?"

"We have not seen it again. It seems to have followed its master."

"Then you have another trump card in your hand, if you know how to play it. The dog may help us to discover its master. Give a description of the animal to all our men, and tell them not to lose sight of it if they should see it in the street."

"I will do so, my lord, but I do not fancy the rascal will venture to show himself here. Perhaps, it may be as well also to keep an eye on that woman under Sourdat's roof, lest—"

"What is your opinion of Sourdat?" asked Fouché, abruptly.

"My opinion, my lord!" exclaimed Caillotte. "I have none."

"Don't pretend not to understand me. I want to know whether you think we may rely upon him under all circumstances."

"I see no reason for doubting it."

"But I do. Why did he not run after the dog himself, when it escaped?"

"It would certainly have been natural to do so," murmured Caillotte, who was not over-fond of his brother spy.

"Especially as I had ordered him to take the dog out, on purpose to see if it would not attach itself to some one."

"If I have orders to keep an eye on Sourdat as well, it shall be done," insinuated Caillotte. "I am always ready to obey orders."

"Very well. But be discreet, for I may want him again and it will not do to scare him. Now tell me who you think has been at the bottom of this plot?"

"George Cadoudal, my lord. He is the only man who could have combined such shrewdness with such audacity."

"Come, you are a clever fellow," said Fouché, opening one of the drawers in his secretary. "Take this roll of fifty napoleons for your im-

mediate expenses, and work on. You shall have a thousand on the day you can prove to me that George is in Paris, and two thousand the day you arrest him."

"My lord, I cannot thank you adequately," exclaimed Caillotte, "but I swear that I will deliver him up or die by his hand."

And with a low bow he retreated backwards to the door, while Fouché rang for his carriage to take him to the Tuileries.

XI.

LIARDOT had passed through many anxious moments since he quitted the Palais-Royal Gardens so suddenly. He had spent nearly all the afternoon after he had lost the dog in drawing up proclamations and orders in readiness for the evening, but the night found him tortured by restless impatience.

He had dressed himself ready for action on receipt of the tidings he expected, and throwing off his humble and insignificant carriage and demeanour, had resumed the imperious and determined air of a leader of men. His eyes now sparkled like a couple of black diamonds, for he hoped never again to have to veil their acuteness. He was prepared for the approach of danger, and kept pacing his room, stopping every now and then to listen for the clatter of a horse's hoofs down the Rue des Prouvaires, for eight o'clock had just struck on the clock of St. Eustache. The suspense seemed to transfigure his face, and rendered it grand in its excitement.

Louise Maneheu was anxiously watching him, as she sat silently with her arm resting on the desk at which he had been writing. She too had passed a restless afternoon, though she had never uttered either complaint or question since Liardot had told her of Jacobin's flight. She had occupied herself, as usual, with household cares, and when the dinner-hour had arrived, had sat down opposite her protector without showing that she noticed any change in him.

Jacques Sourdat usually came home to dinner at four, and went out again at eight to the café in the Rue du Mouton. To-day he was back by noon, and betrayed no intention of going out again. Why was this? Louise might guess the reason, but she asked nothing; the habitual silence observed between them from motives of prudence was still maintained, though both were aware that the situation was about to be changed, and Liardot only awaited St. Victor's tidings to entrust her with the secret, and announce that she would soon be set free.

And still St. Victor did not come. Time was passing on, and at last the old royalist opened the window to listen, but there was no sound to break the distant hum of the now quiet city. He closed the window again, murmuring: "Still nothing! What can delay him thus?"

Louise raised her large blue eyes to his, and asked if he were feeling ill.

"No," said he, curtly, and again began to pace the room; then, after a moment, he added: "Go to bed, Louise. It is late. I am not going out to-night, and shall be obliged to sit up some time longer, but it is useless for you to do so."

"Do you think I could sleep while you were in danger?" murmured she, almost under her breath.

"I in danger? You know that my adventures are over, since George thinks me too old to stand fire."

"I know that you saved me at the risk of your own life, and that in order to protect me, you are each day braving a denunciation or surprise which might bring you before a court-martial and prove fatal—to us both."

Liardot was about to reply, but paused, for the clock struck nine. "He will not come," said he to himself.

"Whom are you expecting?" asked Louise timidly.

He hesitated an instant, and then, feeling it was no time for dissimulation, exclaimed:

"You ask whom I am expecting? The messenger who was to bring me the tidings that would set you free, tidings of the death of the usurper. This messenger is the man whom you saw on the 21st of August at Bois-Guillaume, and here again during the past month."

"With a young girl?"

"Yes, and would to God he had never met her, for she must be a party to our failure!"

"A failure of the king's cause?" stammered out Louise.

"Why should I hide it from you, now that all is lost? Our friends, commanded by Cadoudal, were to attack Bonaparte on the Rueil road at night-fall, and St. Victor to ride on here as soon as ever the battle was over. He should have been here more than an hour ago, and if he has failed to appear it is because we are defeated."

"He may have fallen in the encounter."

"Then George would have sent one of our comrades in his place. Since no one has come, all must be lost."

"Did you know that our fate would be decided to-night?" asked Louise with some emotion.

"I did. Could you suppose I had ceased to contend for our sacred cause?"

"No, indeed, and many a time since you rescued me, I have wondered why you concealed from me your hopes, your joys and fears."

"What would have been the use of imparting them?" said Liardot, frowning.

"I should have been so happy to share your fortunes and sufferings."

"Well, you know all now. Your friends and I are done for."

"You?"

"Yes, by this time they must be either dead or prisoners, and Fouché's implacable police are on my track. My only remaining anxiety, Louise, is your safety. You must escape to England; there may yet be time, a woman can avoid snares in which a man would be caught. You have the strength and energy necessary to gain the coast; I can give you a list of our refuges on the road, which have not yet been discovered, and a letter for our country friends and for an influential member of the committee in London. You will be received at Eu by a friend of ours whom you must have seen at Bois-Guillaume, Troche the clock-maker; no one will recognise you in your present dress, and Troche will find a fishing-boat to take you across the Channel by night."

"It is useless. I shall not go," said Louise, lowering her voice.

"Why not? What madness impels you to remain in a city where you have nothing but enemies?"

"I fancied I had one friend—a protector—"

"You mean your husband? Well, it is time you learnt what I had hoped to conceal from you. Maneheu was taking an important part in this

night's enterprise. Whether he has been killed or arrested comes to the same thing. Consequently—"

"Pierre killed!" repeated Louise. "Can I be free? No, you are only deceiving me to induce me to fly."

"I swear to you," said Liardot, "that your husband was concerned in this plot, and if it has failed, though he may have escaped the sabres of the Consular Guard, he cannot escape being sentenced by the military commission."

"Free!" repeated Louise to herself.

"It was he who kept the inn where our friends assembled before the attack, and he who gave us the signal in the Palais-Royal this morning. You may imagine how anxious the gendarmes will be to catch him, if he has not already fallen beneath their sabres."

Thomas de Graverend's daughter hid her face in her hands, but still repeated in a low voice: "I shall not go."

"It is madness to say so. They will have no mercy upon you, and it is a miracle that you have escaped them so far. Who knows but they may employ your dog to track you?"

Louise shuddered at the thought of her faithful Jacobin involuntarily assisting Fouché's agents. "He ran after Pierre, did he not?" asked she, with an emotion she vainly strove to conceal.

"Well, yes. I did not choose to let you know, while there was yet hope, but now that all is lost, I must tell you that Jacobin ran after his master, having recognised him when he appeared for an instant in the Palais-Royal. The dog must have fallen into the hands of spies, who will know how to profit by his marvellous instinct. This house is already watched; the only wonder is that we are both still at large. But what will happen now that suspicions are aroused by this attempt on the life of the first Consul?"

Liardot paused and saw that Louise had grown paler. "You see now how necessary it is for you to go," said he, firmly.

"I will go—if you will go with me," said the last of the Barosmenils with an effort.

"What do you mean?" demanded he who had once borne the title of Fleur-de-Rose in the royal army. "You forget that I am a man, and bound to do my duty to the end."

"I am a woman, and if I have no duties to discharge, I have at least a right to die with you."

"With me? And, pray, how can my death concern you, when you are neither daughter nor sister to me? Forgive me if I wound your feelings, but I cannot see why you should persist in sharing my sad fortunes."

"How can you talk thus?" said Louise, in a tearful voice, "how can I forget that to you I owe my liberty and happiness—"

"Happiness!" cried Liardot. "Can you call yourself happy in the miserable condition to which circumstances have reduced you! You who were living in peace, respected and loved—"

"Loved! No, indeed," murmured Pierre Manheux's wife. "I have been alone ever since my father fell under the gendarmes' bullets."

"Alone? Were you not married to one of the king's bravest soldiers?"

"Pierre loved me once, but he does not love me now, or he would have risked everything to find me again."

"You are unjust. Your husband owed passive obedience to George, who forbade him to show himself in Paris. And how could he guess where you

were? I am the one to merit your reproaches, for I obeyed Cadoudal by not betraying the secret of your presence here."

"No doubt it was needful for the welfare of the king's cause. And God is my witness that I bear Pierre no grudge for all he has made me suffer."

"Made you suffer, Louise?"

"Oh, you cannot know what it is to have to stifle every generous emotion of your heart, and be forced to associate with mean desires and narrow calculations. Pierre is no longer the intrepid, devoted Chouan; he has become the farmer of Bois-Guillaume, bent on getting rich. He was ready to serve the king so long as he had the hope of amassing a fortune, but now that his farm is burnt down, I feel sure he only wishes to be free from his oath."

"If I thought that—"

"You may think it," resumed Louise, bitterly. "I am the only person who has had an opportunity of sounding his avarice. During my two years' residence on my native soil, Pierre never gave me an affectionate word; he made me suffer till I asked myself whether, when he once picked me up as I lay dying under a hedge, and hid me in his cottage at the risk of being sent to the scaffold for harbouring a rebel, when he married the poor orphan—"

"Well?"

"Whether he did not act thus because I was the sole representative of a race accustomed to shed its blood for the king, who would reward its sacrifices one day by restoring to me the Le Graverend estates. Yet I always did my duty. I do not mean that part of it which consisted in risking my life on the cliff; it cost me nothing to obey Pierre's orders in that, for my father had always taught me to think more of honour than of life. No, I speak of a resignation which cost me still more, of the tears I shed, and humiliations I endured without complaint. The first time I set eyes on you, my patience was nearly exhausted. How well I remember that day which seemed to change my life! You were seated in our room, with your face turned to the open door, and the setting sun played round your head like the nimbus round that of a saint. When Pierre sent me off to the cliff, your image hovered before my eyes while the bayonets were pointed at my breast, and when you appeared to me in prison, I felt as if my guardian angel had come to take me by the hand and lead me to heaven."

While Louise was indulging in these passionate reminiscences, Liardot sat silently with his gaze fixed, and his arms folded over his breast.

"Louise," said he, deliberately, "if you feel any gratitude to me for having rescued you, you will show it by leaving France."

"Never, so long as you are there! Why should I fear to share your fate?"

Liardot turned pale. He did not wish to understand.

"Cannot you see that you would be an encumbrance to me here? If alone, I have still a feeble chance of escaping my enemies; if you remain, I am sure to be lost. You say that you would gladly die; be on your guard, Louise, a woman has no right to sacrifice her life for any man but the one she loves."

Thomas le Graverend's daughter rose to her feet, and said impetuously: "Then I may sacrifice my life for you, since I love you!"

"Love me!" cried Liardot. "Will you dare to say that you love me?"

"God will judge me if He thinks me guilty, but I cannot deny it," said Louise, passionately. "I do love you, and if you are killed, I have no wish to survive you."

"Unhappy woman! For I do not love you and never shall. Cannot you see that my heart is still given to one who is dead, and has no room for any other earthly passion?"

"Yes, I know your last thoughts will be of the woman whose veiled picture hangs on that wall," returned Louise, "and that you will never feel anything but pity for me. What does that matter? I do not ask for a love which would be criminal. All I implore of you is to let me continue as your servant, your slave, until the day when we mount the scaffold and yield up our souls together. Grant me but this!"

"Louise, you are mad!"

"Mad!" said she bitterly, "yes, I am mad indeed to think you will take pity on the poor forlorn creature whom you only despise."

"Listen to me, woman," said Liardot, "and answer me quietly. You say that you wish to share my fate, no matter what it be. Will you swear never again to speak to me of your insane passion?"

"I will, and God will give me strength to suffer and keep my oath."

"Very well. And now you must know that the man with whom you would link your fate is one of Fouché's spies."

"You," cried Louise. "No, that is impossible!"

"Do you remember how I delivered you from prison? Not, as you supposed, by risking my life, but with the connivance of my employer, Fouché, to whom I promised to betray the secrets he had not been able to extort from you. I have promised too to betray all our party to him, and I receive pay for my treachery. Every day when you see me go out, and fancy it is to join George, I am going to my work as a spy. Do you still persist in your wish?"

While Liardot was speaking with suppressed indignation of his supposed infamy, Louise was trying to read the truth on this noble countenance, on which there was no look of treachery.

"No," said she slowly, "you cannot have fallen so low as to sell your comrades' blood, and desert the cause of the king. I have just seen hope and anxiety sparkling in your eyes when you expected to hear of the usurper's fall, and your face belies your words."

"I swear to you on my honour that I am in Fouché's pay."

"Then *he* is the man you are deceiving!" said Louise, without hesitation. "You may have stooped to act as his agent in order to further our cause, but I will not believe in any other treachery."

Liardot felt vanquished in this singular struggle against a woman's infatuation. "Louise," said he, "since you have fathomed my secret, I will not persist in denying that I serve under Fouché merely in order to serve our own party, and so long as I retained Fouché's confidence, I felt nearly sure of being able to preserve them from disaster. To-night, however, all seems over, and at this moment, they may be dead or under arrest. Now that you know the true state of affairs, I again implore you to save yourself."

"What! By leaving you in the hour of danger?"

"What is there to stay for? Do not you see that Fouché will soon get tired of hearing that I can get nothing out of you? He will be sending to put you in prison, and I shall be unable to deliver you."

"I had rather die in a dungeon than compromise you. If I were to escape, this wretch, Fouché, would make you pay dearly for proving the accomplice of the prisoner intrusted to your keeping."

"I shall tell him that you have eluded my vigilance, in spite of all my precautions."

"He will not believe you, for you own he half suspects you already."

Liardot paused and considered the dilemma in which he was placed by the woman's obstinacy. "I ask for the last time," said he, "do you refuse to leave me?"

"I do," said Louise, with such an air of determination that he felt it useless to persist.

"Then we shall perish together, unless some miracle happens. Listen!" whispered he, seizing her by the arm. "Twelve o'clock is striking, it is too late now. Even if the messenger were to arrive, I could not tell where to find the men who were expecting me in the *Marché des Innocents*. It is all over for to-night, and Heaven only knows what awaits us on the morrow."

"I fancy I hear a noise on the staircase," whispered the young woman, straining her ear. "Some one is running up—there is a violent pull at the bell—it must be the messenger to tell you of victory."

"Or else the police come to arrest me," said Liardot quietly, as he took a dagger from the table, concealing it in his right hand. "Stay here, Louise, while I open the door."

Louise made a gesture as though she would detain Liardot, but feeling this to be useless, followed him into the passage which separated the room from the outer door.

Her excitement was so great, that, at the moment, she would have looked on a death shared with Liardot as the height of bliss, and perhaps she was secretly hoping to be met at the door by a volley of fire-arms. The confession of the long concealed passion which had at length escaped her lips had transfigured her, as the hope of success had the supposed Soudat.

The courageous and resigned peasant had developed into an ardent heroine, but that evening was not to furnish her with an occasion for displaying her devotion. Liardot uttered a cry of surprise and joy on finding St. Victor standing before him.

"At last!" said he, holding out his arms. "Heaven be praised! I did not think I should see you again, for I feared all must be lost."

"You were half right," replied the lieutenant. "By a miracle I have escaped, but our attempt has failed."

"What! Have our friends—has George—"

"George has not been taken, I hope, nor our comrades either. But we must give up all thoughts of attacking Bonaparte again."

"Then the escort has had the best of it?" asked Liardot, knitting his brow.

"No, that was not it. I will tell you all, but let me sit down, for I am quite spent."

"You are wounded," exclaimed Louise.

"Oh, do you see the scratch? I thought I had bound it up so well with my handkerchief."

"What has happened to you?" insisted Liardot.

"Oh, less than nothing. A bullet grazed my shoulder. By to-morrow the mark will have disappeared. Take me to your room. I have so much to tell and ask that there is no time to lose."

"Come," said his friend, and St. Victor followed, well remembering where he had once taken refuge with Gabrielle. The young woman was following them, but Liardot said gently: "Pray leave us by ourselves, Louise."

"It was the wound—I wished—" stammered she.

"I request it, Louise," insisted Liardot. She seized his hand after a moment's hesitation, kissed it, and turned away.

"Has that woman lost her senses?" asked St. Victor.

"Almost," growled Liardot. "She is bewitched."

"By you? I prophesied you would find yourself in difficulties," laughed the lieutenant.

"Never mind that. Tell me what has happened."

St. Victor began to recount their adventure, mentioning that he had seen the man who had been talking to Liardot in the morning on the box seat of the First Consul's carriage, and proceeding to relate how, after leaping into the river with his poor wounded mare, the animal had sunk, but he himself had managed to swim to an island, whence, after resting a while, he had swam across to the other bank, and then made his way back to Paris on foot, directing his steps by the constellation of the Great Bear. When he had ended his simple narrative, Liardot pressed him to his heart.

"But for you, my son, we should all be on our way to the scaffold," said he, with much emotion.

"Who knows what will come yet?" rejoined St. Victor. "Still we must play our part to the end."

"What will George do?"

"Go to earth for a time like a fox hunted down by the hounds. His last words were: 'Every man for himself, and to your homes till you receive further orders.'"

"He was right. Are you going to obey him?"

"Yes, though this seclusion will not be very amusing. Nay, more, I am going to be so prudent as to change both my name and style of dress. I should not need these precautions except for my peculiar relations to Major Robert."

And upon this St. Victor launched into the history of his love for Gabrielle, and her appearance by her brother's side that day; Liardot suggested grave suspicions as to her fidelity, and at length succeeding in extorting the young Chouan's promise not to see her again till their fate was decided. He then asked how St. Victor intended to communicate with Cadoudal.

"He will probably transmit his instructions through you as heretofore, and so I propose to come here two or three times a week."

"Do nothing of the sort," said Liardot impatiently. "You forget that the secret of our ambushade was detected by Caillotte, who is my rival in Pouché's confidence. I feel sure he will denounce me to his master; this house will be watched, and we must meet elsewhere. There is a little café at the corner of the Place de Grève and Rue du Mouton where I am to be found every evening from eight to ten. Come there, disguised, when you want to speak to me. Of course no recognition must be exchanged, and if I see any suspicious persons about, I shall put my hat on, in which case you must leave without attempting to join me on my way out, and come again next day. If you find me sitting bare-headed, take your leave in a quarter of an hour, and go to meet me on the bank of the river at the further end of the Grève."

"Agreed. But now about George, for I must see him."

"The police are not furnished with a description of his appearance as they are with ours. No one suspects as yet that he is in Paris, so you can go to him if you take care to disguise yourself thoroughly, and I beg you

will do so as soon as possible to explain my situation to him—but to him only.”

“I will tell him without taking Maneheu into my confidence,” said St. Victor, smiling. “And now I must take leave of you and assume my new character at once, if I am to circumvent Fouché’s spies. I was once the hunter,” added he with a sign, “and now I am become the quarry. God bless you !”

And after embracing like brothers in arms on the eve of a battle, the two Chouans parted.

XII.

Six months have elapsed. The penitent Jacobins who sit in the Assembly are about to confer the imperial dignity on Napoleon Bonaparte ; France, thirsting for glory and weary of liberty, is anxious to give herself a master who makes her victorious on the battle-field, and scarcely remembers her legitimate king, the Comte de Provence, a gouty prince who consoles himself in exile by translating Horace.

And yet a handful of men are still labouring for the royal cause ; George and his comrades are still in Paris, and the band has been recruited by courageous exiles, impatient to risk their lives for their sovereign, and men of rank, tired of remaining idle in London while others of meaner birth are braving death every day in the French capital. Landings are still effected on Biville cliff ; Troche, a clockmaker at Eu and a bold partisan of the Chouans, has taken Maneheu’s place at the cable, and receives new-comers there. The Comte d’Artois, the king’s brother, has some thoughts of crossing the channel soon, and his son, the Duc de Berry, has promised to come.

The royalists have enlarged their schemes, and are now endeavouring to instigate a rising in the army and a revolution throughout the country against the insolent soldier who wants to make himself a Cæsar. Cadoudal has actually ventured back to Biville to receive Pichegru, the republican conqueror of Holland, who has turned conspirator more from jealousy of his former rivals in glory, than from any love of monarchy. George has done even more ; he has introduced Pichegru, within a week of his landing, on a dark winter’s night, upon the Boulevard de la Madeleine, to Moreau, the victor of Hohenlinden, the one man whose name can be bracketed with that of Bonaparte.

The police are still blind, and the watchful Fouché can detect but little, while his agent, Caillotte, is still pursuing shadows. Every Chouan seems to have disappeared, there are no more meetings, and every man disguises himself when he goes out. Even St. Victor, who appeared as a pedlar at Bois-Guillaume, now dresses as a *commissionnaire* when he issues from his impenetrable refuge in the Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève. Maneheu, having lost his inn, lives with his General on the Quai de Chaillot, and spends his time in regretting his farm and cursing the fate which still chains him to his party. Jacobin is tied up in the stable where his master sleeps, and is visibly pining. Malabry is living in a cellar ; he sells chest-nuts in the day-time, and gives boxing-lessons in the evening to the Auvergnats in his quarter. Tamerlane lodges in a garret, and spends his time in teaching the son of his *concierge*, and writing a poem in four and twenty cantos, dedicated to Hugh Capet.

Fouché still persists in declaring that the future Emperor is walking over a secret mine, and yet he can learn nothing from the reports of his spies. Caillotte still maintains that George is in Paris, but he gets no further; he could learn nothing about the people who had bought the Chouans' horses in the market, or the proprietor of the *Chant-du-Coq*. He has been watching Liardot, Louise, and Gabrielle Robert closely, but can discover nothing.

Liardot has again turned into Sourdat, the model *employé*, as regular in his private as in his official habits. He never goes anywhere but from the Rue des Prouvaires to the Quai Voltaire, or the Rue du Mouton. Louise still acts as his servant, and has never been caught speaking to any one. Jacques Sourdat has been unable to worm any secrets out of her, and often tells his employer that she evidently knows nothing, and must have played a very small part in the landings at Biville. He suggests that it might be best to send her back to Normandy, merely to see what she would do when she got there, and Fouché begins to think so too.

Mademoiselle Robert keeps so quiet that it is difficult to imagine she has ever had the slightest connection with conspirators, and her brother will take care the old story is quite forgotten. She stands high in the favour of the future Empress, and has been one of the reigning beauties at the Tuileries during the winter. The First Consul takes an interest in her, and there is some talk of her approaching marriage to one of the most distinguished officers in what will soon be the Imperial Guard. Still Caillotte refuses to be blinded; he knows that she once loved a handsome young Chonan, whom he suspects of being one of Cadoudal's lieutenants, and he still keeps an eye on the Major's sister.

Poor Gabrielle is very unhappy; for the last six months, she has been loathing the gaieties in which she is compelled to share, and trying to invent reasons for refusing to entertain any of the matrimonial proposals by which she is besieged. She weeps for Charles Valréas, and refuses to believe he is dead, though she has heard nothing more of him. She hopes that Bonaparte, when he becomes Emperor, may issue an amnesty to all conspirators, and she is afraid to question her brother, who studiously avoids any allusion to the past.

It was more than a month since the conspiracy had been mentioned in her presence, when one morning, on the 1st of March, 1804, Major Robert suddenly made his appearance in Gabrielle's little sitting-room at the Tuileries. He had just returned from a short expedition, and was to have an audience of the First Consul at noon. It was then barely nine. Gabrielle was delighted, though surprised to see him so early, for they were deeply attached to one another, and she forgave him all his persecution of her lover, because she knew his affection for her, and that duty had constrained him to proceed against all enemies of General Bonaparte's.

"How glad I am to see you again!" said she, after his first fraternal greetings. "I am always so frightened lest you should never come back."

"Oh, you are such a romantic little creature," said the officer laughing. "You fancy me surrounded by dangers wherever I go, but I have just returned from Normandy, a very sober and quiet apple country. I have something very serious to talk to you about; you can guess what it is."

"No, indeed, François."

"Why, what serious business can we have but your marriage?"

"My marriage!" repeated Gabrielle, turning pale.

"Yes, to be sure. Perlier is quite disconsolate, and came to pour out his

woes to me last night, so I promised to plead his cause with you to-day. Come now, what have you to say against him?"

"Nothing," murmured she.

"He is young, and good-looking, and has something to live on besides his pay, he adores you, and he is about to get promotion and be made commander of a squadron in the dragoons of the Guard. In another week his nomination will be signed, and he is sure also to be enrolled in the Legion of Honour. What more can you want?"

"Nothing, dear François; Captain Perlier is too good a match for me."

"Not so, seeing that you are my sister, and that I have as good a prospect as any man, of becoming a general; besides, you are about to become reader to the Empress, and the future Emperor dotes on you, so I see no reason why you should refuse this man."

Gabrielle hung down her head, and made no reply.

"Listen to me, dear little sister," said the officer gravely; "we love each other too well to let any misunderstandings arise, so you had better speak out what is in your mind, for I can half guess it." Gabrielle raised her tearful eyes.

"Come, be open with me, and confess that you have never forgotten the Tivoli fête and its consequences."

The girl shuddered. Her brother had never said so much since the day after the catastrophe at Bougival. "How can I ever forget the man who saved my life?" said she, by a great effort.

"I am so far from reproaching you," resumed the Major gently, "that I will prove my sincerity by telling you something of which I had meant you to remain in ignorance. I, too, owe my life to your deliverer. The night I chased that black phantom, I fell into a trap laid by the abominable Chouan who used that disguise, and the ferocious brute was about to kill me, when the young man came to my rescue."

"Then, if you would be dead but for him, how can you reproach me for still loving him?" cried Gabrielle.

"I do not reproach you. I myself retain a lively impression of his generosity, and if ever chance had thrown him in my way again, I should have found it hard to lift my hand against him, and still harder to arrest him. But, as you know, he is dead."

"I know you told me so, but I cannot believe it, or give my heart to another. His body has never been found," sobbed she.

"The Seine does not give up all it receives. He must be dead, or would he have given you no sign of his existence during the last six months?"

"He may have left France, or been obliged to let his pursuers think he perished that dreadful night."

"Even that would not explain his silence, unless indeed he had forgotten you. Besides, Fouché's police have been in search of Charles Valréas for the last six months, and they have keen eyes. I had better tell you the plain truth, Gabrielle—it is well he died like a soldier, for if he were still in Paris, he would be captured within the next few days and sent to the scaffold."

The girl shuddered, and could scarcely murmur out: "But did you not tell me that none of those who belonged to his party had been arrested?"

"That was true a fortnight ago, but now the whole plot is being unravelled by the revelations of a Chouan, named Bouvet de Lozier, who was found in the act of hanging himself in prison. Cadoudal has been in Paris for the last six months, and Valréas was probably his lieutenant. After

the failure of that attempt on the Rueil road, he tried to organize a conspiracy in the army, and—would you believe it?—Moreau, the former commander-in-chief of the Rhine army, listened to him. They sent for Pichegru, another traitor, and they were expecting one of their princes from England. I have just come back from the Normandy coast, where I was despatched with fifty picked gendarmes by Colonel Saverny's orders. The prince did not turn up, but Pichegru was arrested yesterday in the Rue Chabanaïs. He had been sold by one of his friends. Moreau is in prison also. The turn of George and his band will come next."

"They will fly at once, if they have not done so already, and get out of the country."

"I defy them to do so. You have not read the decree which is posted up everywhere, forbidding any one to harbour them, even for a single night, on pain of death, and condemning any one who recognises them and does not denounce them to six years in irons. The barriers are closed, the walls surrounded by a cordon of troops, the Seine is guarded by marines at Bercy and Passy. No one can leave Paris now without undergoing the closest examination from Fouché's agents. And this will go on till the last man is taken. Was I not right in saying it was well he was dead?"

Gabrielle cast down her eyes and made no answer.

"Listen, dear little sister," continued the Major, "I am not going to force you into this marriage, however much I may wish it. Still, you must see that it is time Perlier received a definite answer."

Gabrielle bowed her head in token of assent. "Come, that is all I ask," said he gaily. "You can't keep a commander of a squadron waiting as you might a paltry lawyer's clerk! Our poor father would have agreed with me. How many days do you want to make up your mind?"

"Two," replied Gabrielle, after a little hesitation. "This is the 1st of March; come back on the 3rd, and I will give you my answer."

"Very well. But remember, dear Gabrielle, there are to be no more delays, this is the *ultimatum*." And kissing his sister without leaving her time to raise any fresh objections, François Robert departed for his audience of the First Consul.

Gabrielle began to weep bitterly as soon as she found herself alone. Her brother had destroyed her last remaining hope, as well as sown in her heart a bitter germ of doubt. Better Charles should have died than deserted the woman who had sacrificed herself to him. But why had she asked her brother to grant her two days for a decision, instead of at once declaring that she meant to enter a convent rather than give her hand to any but the proscribed Valréas? She scarcely doubted his fate now, but she had determined to ascertain the truth.

How was this to be done when she knew nothing of Valréas but the name by which he had made himself known to her? He had never told her where he lived, and if he had done, it would be madness to suppose he had not changed his residence during the six months the police had been in search of him.

Madame Desrosiers was too much occupied with the fashions and theatres to attend to political news, and had never mentioned to Gabrielle the reports now current in Paris about a grand conspiracy. Gabrielle never once thought of consulting her in this emergency, but she suddenly remembered the friend's house to which Valréas had taken her on the night of the fire. This man might still be there, and able to tell her what had become of him. Unfortunately, she had been carried thither

half unconscious, and when she left it, after being restored by Louise's care, she had not tried to read, under the fitful lamp-light, either the number of the house or the name of the street; she was far too anxious to trouble herself about such details; still she had a vague recollection that Valréas' servant had stopped the vehicle which conveyed them to Malmaison near the Halles, and close to St. Eustache.

In her present mood, she was ready to try anything, and as she shared her brother's promptitude, and was not required by Madame Bonaparte till two o'clock, she at once put on her bonnet and a plaid cloak, and left the palace by a side staircase which brought her out on the Place du Carrousel. She was accountable to no one for her actions, and her former habits as a lacc-making apprentice prevented her from feeling any timidity as to going about alone. She was not in the least afraid, only embarrassed as to how she should find her way in the labyrinth of streets surrounding the Halles, when prudence forbade her questioning any one on the way.

After thinking it well over, she at length remembered that the side entrance to St. Eustache was visible from the centre of the street where Valréas' friend lived, so that she would have to go along the Rue St. Honoré, so she crossed the narrow court-yard where the First Consul reviewed his troops on parade days, and following the Rue St. Nicaise, soon found herself on the Place du Palais-Royal.

Gabrielle had not walked out for weeks, and she fancied that Paris did not look quite as usual. The passers-by looked morose and glanced suspiciously at one another, as if they feared that they might be unwittingly rubbing shoulders against a conspirator or a spy. There were fewer people than usual in this place, but at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and Rue de Valois, a crowd had gathered round a placard, and Mademoiselle Robert stopped for an instant to see what they were reading. It was headed "*Description of George Cadoudal, Leader of the Brigands.*" Such was the title by which the minister chose to describe the Chouans, in days when it had become the custom to fling opprobrious epithets recklessly at all who held political opinions adverse to their own. The Parisians were exclaiming and even laughing at the somewhat incorrect description of George, which scarcely corresponded with their ideas of the great rebel's appearance. A glazier, who was standing in front of the placard with his frame of panes on his back, cried: "If the police apprehend every man answering to that description, they will soon have their hands full. My employer, who is a master-glazier in the Rue Gît-le-Cœur, has red whiskers, and swaggers like a drum-major. That description fits him to a T." The idlers looked at this man and began to move off. They took him for a spy. Gabrielle soon found herself nearly alone, and began to read the list of Cadoudal's accomplices which followed. She drew a sigh of relief on finding that it did not include the name of Charles Valréas, never suspecting that her lover figured on the paper under his real name as "Jean-Baptiste Coster de St. Victor, aged 32."

She noticed, too, that only one, Armand de Polignac, was marked as arrested. The people who stood near her said he had been taken the night before in the Rue St. Denis, and that the others would be caught soon. She did not stay to hear any more, for it made her blood run cold, so she walked on down the Rue St. Honoré, thinking that all the houses looked exactly alike. Still, when she reached the corner of the Rue des Prouvaires, she saw the side entrance to St. Eustache, and paused. She believed she had found the right street, but how to find the house was a

greater difficulty, as she did not even know the name of the man whose roof had sheltered her for an hour. There were very few people about to disturb her in her investigations, when she was suddenly startled by the shrill cry behind her of "Any windows to me-e-end!" and turning sharply round, found herself face to face with the glazier whom she recognised as having seen reading the description of George Cadoudal.

"Are you looking for a number, Mademoiselle?" said the man, politely. "I shall be glad to help you if I can. I belong to this quarter, and know every one in the Rue des Prouvaires."

Gabrielle, in her surprise, was on the point of asking this obliging glazier if he knew where a young woman lived whose name she did not know but whom she could readily describe, for she felt sure that Louise Manehieu would be easily distinguished from her neighbours. She remembered, however, that it might be imprudent to ask a stranger when so many spies must be abroad, so, briefly thanking the man, she began to retrace her steps, while the glazier went along the street uttering his shrill cry.

She was walking home in despair, when, at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré, she almost ran into a woman coming from the opposite direction. Gabrielle almost shrieked; it was Louise Mancheu; they recognised each other and stood motionless, face to face.

For the first time since she had started on her expedition, Gabrielle perceived how hard it would be for her to explain the step she was taking, while Louise, on her side, felt great embarrassment in the presence of the girl whom she recognised instantly, and knew to be the sister of the gendarme officer. She knew a great deal besides, for Liardot, having once begun by telling her some things in hopes of curing her of her infatuation, had ended by almost making her his confidante. She was well acquainted with St. Victor's passion for Gabrielle Robert, for the old Chouan frequently lamented his friend's foolish attachment for the sister of a gendarme officer, and cursed the follies and weaknesses by which a conspirator should be uncumbered. Louise understood the allusion to herself, but listened in silence, and sympathised secretly with St. Victor. She was the first to break a silence which was becoming painful.

"Come here," said she, darting down the passage of a house, and the young girl followed promptly. "It would not do," said she, "for the people in the street to see you talking to a servant."

"I was in search of you," murmured Gabrielle, "and of the house which sheltered me so hospitably, and if you will take me there—"

"No," said Louise, firmly, "we had better talk here."

She was not suspicious of the gendarme's sister, but did not choose to take her to Liardot's house.

"It does not signify," replied Mademoiselle Robert; "I have only a simple question to ask, and my life depends on your answer."

"Proceed, Mademoiselle."

"I want to know whether the young man who brought me to your house after saving me from a frightful death, whether—he is yet alive."

Louise started, and said, deliberately: "Why do you ask me that?"

Gabrielle hesitated for a moment, but could find no satisfactory answer but the truth. "Because I love him," said she, colouring.

"You love him! And you have waited six months before inquiring?" exclaimed Louise Mancheu.

"How could I inquire? Who was there to ask? I kept waiting patiently, hoping that he would find some means of letting me know that

he was alive and had not forgotten me. I hoped in vain, nothing came, and so at last I resolved to take this step—which I trust you will excuse.”

“Then you remembered the street and the house to which you were brought?”

“No, for it was by night, and all I could remember was that we found a conveyance near St. Eustache. I set out to search for the house, but it was all in vain, and if I had not been so fortunate as to meet you, I could only have died.”

“And how do you know I can give you any information?”

“Ah, I see you take me for an enemy, perhaps indeed for a spy.”

Louise fixed her eyes on her but said nothing.

“I have guessed right, then,” resumed Gabrielle, passionately; “you are afraid of my betraying you! I will not reproach you, perhaps in your place I might do the same, but listen to me and you will know that I am not false. I am attached to Madame Bonaparte’s household, my brother belongs to the picked gendarmes, and is hunting down the royalists. What does that matter? I love Charles Valréas and am ready to lay down my life for him. You are a woman and must feel that no woman could risk her reputation, as I am now doing, unless she were animated by genuine love.”

This unintentional allusion to her own situation went straight to Louise’s heart. “I believe you now,” said she with some emotion. “The man you love is alive.”

“God bless you!” cried Gabrielle, seizing her hands. “You have saved me from despair.”

“He lives and loves you still,” resumed Louise, almost in tears.

“Does he love me? Does he remember me still? And I could accuse him!”

“What could he do? Proscribed, tracked by spies, with a reward set on his head, how could he let you know of his existence?”

“Ah! shame on me to have ever doubted him! Tell me at once where I can find him?”

“Never! The secret you ask is not mine to reveal.”

“You say that he loves me, and yet you will allow him still to go on believing I have forgotten all I promised him! You cannot be so cruel.”

“I have pledged myself to betray his refuge to no one.”

“Farewell then. All I can do is to die. You will see him, so I pray you to tell him at least of my entreaties, and say my last thought was of him.”

“The time is near at hand when our fate will be settled; wait!” murmured Louise.

“Wait! When every hour adds to the dangers by which he is surrounded! When, by to-morrow, even, it may be too late to save him!”

“And how could you save him?”

“I know not how, yet I feel sure I can get him out of Paris, or if he should fall into the hands of his enemies, I would throw myself at the feet of the First Consul, and ask his pardon.”

“It would not be granted.”

“Oh, yes! for Madame Bonaparte would join in my entreaties, if necessary; and if her intervention were of no avail, my brother, who has served the General faithfully ever since the Italian campaign, and sees him every day, would also intercede for him.”

“Your brother! The leader of the gendarmes who—”

"I know that he pursued M. Valréas that fatal night. But I know, too, that he owes his life to him, and would feel bound to own the obligation by saving him."

Louise Maneheu knew the story of the Black Leg, and an idea flashed across her mind. "Promise me," said she, "that if all our friends are arrested, you will include another name in your petition."

"I will promise to sue equally for both."

"Very well. I shall rely on your promise in case of need. The man you love lives at No. 32 Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève, in a house which has a lottery office on the first floor. You must ascertain that the clerk is alone, then go in and ask if you can stake on Nos. 93 and 94. He will reply 'No, for there are only 90 numbers,' and you must then say: *Show me the place for a sequence of three.* This is the pass-word, and the man will take you to our friend."

"Thank you," said Gabrielle, simply.

"And now leave me at once," continued Louise. "We have been here too long already."

Gabrielle pressed the young woman's hands fervently, and ran so hastily out of the passage that she almost knocked down the obliging glazier whom she had met before. The worthy man swore a little, but soon recovered his equanimity on recognising the charming lady, and went on his way with a shriller cry than ever. Mademoiselle Robert took no notice of him, and did not even turn back to look after Louise, but flew joyously along. She knew the neighbourhood of the Pantheon well, for she had been brought up in that quarter; it was very quiet, and she soon found the steep street, and the lottery office at No. 32.

The house was an ancient, peaceful-looking habitation, with flower-boxes in its narrow windows, and the lottery office on the ground floor looked like a kind of shop whose opaque windows harboured some despicable trade. Placards were hung in each pane, announcing the numbers drawn at Lyons, Bordeaux, Strasburg, and other large cities which rejoiced in a branch of this national institution. These offices, where Government dispensed hope for cash, were generally besieged all day long by a crowd of poor devils who came to part with their daily bread for a dirty ticket. This quarter, however, was so poverty-stricken, that no one had yet appeared that morning. Gabrielle stopped before the door, and hearing no sound, she presumed that the receiver was alone, and ventured in, closing the glazed door as she entered. The sound made the clerk, who, at the moment, was napping, with his head on the registers, suddenly wake up. He was a tall, bony individual, and wore a green cap, the enormous peak of which almost concealed his face.

"What can I do for you, my pretty lady?" asked this singular figure, in dulcet accents. "May I have the honour of inscribing your name on the roll of luck for a couple of numbers?"

No reply came, and he resumed: "Then you wish for a triplet? I have an arrangement here which has not been out for three years, the very thing for a youthful beauty. Look here," added he, exhibiting a worn and soiled ticket, "3, the Graces, 9, the Muses, and 19, the youthful number of your years."

The young girl, quite stunned by this torrent of words, still remained silent.

"Oh, then," cried the loquacious vendor of numbers, "I see your ambition aspires to a quartet. You are quite right. Here are the last num-

bers drawn in Paris : 26, 24, 6, 28, and 52. Our experts maintain that you have only to multiply each of the four first figures by two in order to obtain the right quartet within a given time. 'Still, I must say I hold with the poet, '*Think not this oracle like that of Calchas sure,*' and if you will—"

"Sir," said Gabrielle, "what I want is to know whether I can stake on Nos. 93 and 94?"

At this question the clerk gave such a sudden start that he jerked off his cap, disclosing a pale face, which the girl fancied she had seen before. "No," replied he, "for there are only 90 numbers."

"Then," rejoined Gabrielle, "will you show me *the place for a sequence of three.*"

This time the man bounded from his seat like a Jack in a box, and exclaimed : "What, Mademoiselle, is it you?"

"Do you know me?" stammered out Gabrielle.

"Know you? Yes, indeed, though it is seven months since I last set eyes on your charming face. I see you do not remember me, and yet you cannot have forgotten the fête at Tivoli, and the car of Phaeton, and the fire from which my friend had the good fortune to rescue you."

"Was it you who were with M. Valréas?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, and I was fortunate enough to be able to assist a lady who had the charms of Juno. May I ask what has become of that remarkable person?"

"She is quite well, but pray give me the information I have asked for. Time is precious. Some one may be coming in."

"I am quite at your disposal, and will at once show you *the place for a sequence of three.*" So saying, the clerk, who was none other than the poetie Tamerlane, left his desk to bolt the shop-door.

"We cannot be too cautious," said he. "But what a charming surprise this will be for our friend, who no more expects you to grace his modest lodging with your presence than I thought of this meeting when I left home early this morning to take the place of one of our party who usually presides—"

"Oh, pray, make haste—" And Gabrielle's face was so eloquent that Tamerlane made for the further end of the shop.

"Come here," said he, opening a panel in the wainscoting, and showing a square opening through which an ordinary-sized man might pass by stooping a little. Tamerlane's height would have made it necessary for him to crawl through, but he did not attempt it. "This is the way, Mademoiselle," said he, graciously. "You will find a spiral staircase which will lead you straight to the door of the *sequence of three.* I am delighted to see that you are one of us, since you know the pass-word. When you reach the door, knock four times, two knocks, then pause, and give two more. Our friend will then open it, and when the young divinity who condescends to visit him wishes to return to Olympus, he will show her how to leave this house."

Gabrielle instantly entered and ascended the stairs, while Tamerlane slid back the panel. Her feelings were too strong to admit of any hesitation or embarrassment as she gave four knocks at a door which stood before her after ascending a dozen steps.

"Come in!" said a well-known voice, whose accents thrilled her. She opened the door, and saw Charles Valréas writing at a little table. He recognised her instantly, though the room was dark, and ran to her, holding out his arms.

"You here!" cried he; "you whom I had despaired of ever seeing again!"

"I too have despaired," said Gabrielle, gently repulsing him; "I thought you were dead, for you quite forgot me after that terrible night."

"Forgot you! I should have been out of France long ago if I had forgotten you. It was because I wanted to see you again that I have persevered in this ill-fated struggle."

"You say you wanted to see me again? How have you shown it?"

"What could I do? It was impossible for me to approach your residence, the Tuileries. You do not know the search that is being made for me."

"I know all. But why could not you write? I would have come."

"Could I be sure that your feelings remained the same? Had not I reason to fear I might offend you by reminding you of what you were possibly striving to forget?"

"Then you too could suspect me! And when you saw me in the First Consul's carriage—"

"I thought your brother had compelled you to accompany him," interposed St. Victor.

"Thank you for having had faith in me," murmured Gabrielle tearfully.

The young Chouan took her hand and seated her on the only chair in his room; he knelt before her as he had once done under the trees at Malmaison, and Gabrielle allowed him to cover her trembling hands with kisses, and to pour out the eternal vocabulary of lovers in all ages. Still she remained silent and pensive, revelling in her present happiness, but feeling that a catastrophe was at hand.

"Charles," said she, suddenly, "you must flee and get out of France."

"You know that is impossible," said the lieutenant quietly.

"But you must; I implore it, I beseech you."

"Leave France, Gabrielle, and lose you forever?"

"How do you know I would not join you abroad?"

"You would! You would give up your brother and the brilliant future that lies before you at the court of the new Emperor?"

"Listen to my plans, Charles, though they may prove to be only dreams. Return to London and I will promise to follow you. As soon as I am your wife, my brother will be forced to ask the Emperor to pardon my husband, and when all these plots are a thing of the past, we can return to France."

"You might well speak of dreams," said the supposed Valréas, smiling sadly. "I am not one of those whom Bonaparte will pardon."

"But you will be his enemy no longer. You will be a royalist who adheres to his convictions, but has given up conspiring, and when I throw myself at the feet of Madame Josephine, who has always shown me so much kindness, and beg her to intercede for the man whose name I bear, I am sure she will never refuse. She, too, is a royalist, or a noble at any rate; was she not the Marquise de Beauharnais before she married Bonaparte? She cannot help feeling an interest in a man of birth who is brave and unfortunate."

While Gabrielle was talking so enthusiastically, St. Victor had risen to his feet and listened with deep emotion; not that he shared her illusions, but he was touched by her ardent undisguised affection, and was half ready to own that if he could wed Gabrielle without ceasing to serve the king, he should be the happiest of men.

"You talk of escaping," said he. "You cannot know that the barriers

are closed, that Paris is surrounded like a besieged city, and that no one can leave it unless he has a safe-conduct signed by the Chief-Justice."

"I know that."

"And yet you have hopes? This house in which I have found a safe retreat, thanks to a poor woman devoted to our cause, may be invaded any minute by the police. You are acquainted with the lottery office and our pass-word; others may surprise our secret."

"If I know them," said Gabrielle promptly, "it is because I went to ask the only person who could have told me, the woman to whose house you took me after saving my life at Tivoli. She believed in me when I told her I loved you and wanted to help you; she told me all, so I came here, and your friend below recognised me too, and showed me your room."

"He, like myself, is proscribed, and he has left his safe retreat to come and watch over me in this office, taking the place of a man who favours us secretly, but is afraid of being compromised."

"And now that you have heard how I came here, let me tell you what I can do for you. You require a safe-conduct to enable you to leave Paris; well, I shall get one through my brother, and bring it you to-morrow."

Gabrielle was quite aware that to obtain this safe-conduct she might be forced to consent to the marriage proposed by her brother, still she felt capable of sacrificing even her love for the sake of her lover, and would resign herself to die of a broken heart, if only she could save his life. St. Victor however gave her little time to reflect on what chances she had of influencing François Robert.

"You talk of a safe-conduct," said he; "but no mere officer, however intimate he may be with the First Consul, could give one, and your brother's signature will not open the barriers. Besides, how could he shield a rebel who has been outlawed, without seriously compromising himself?"

"It is not necessary that your name should figure on the paper I shall entreat him to give me."

"Then it would be a blank passport? I am afraid no one is allowed to issue anything of the sort."

"I am sure it is done. Fouché's agents and the picked gendarmes come and go as they please. They must be furnished with some paper or pass-word."

"Possibly," murmured St. Victor. "Still, I should have to disguise myself as a gendarme or a spy."

"What would that signify?"

"Very little, indeed. In fact I should not be sorry at all to adopt this disguise." And St. Victor smiled at the thought of playing such a trick on his opponents.

"Then you will promise to use the passport if I bring it?"

St. Victor became serious again, and shook his head, saying: "I cannot abandon my comrades who have been sharing the dangers of this life with me for the last six months."

"Would you rather die with them than live for me?" exclaimed Gabrielle.

He did not reply at once. The idea had struck him that if Gabrielle could obtain the blank pass, he might use it to save George Cadoudal, the last hope of the royalists, and try to effect his own escape by some other means.

"Well, I will accept it," said he gently.

"Ah, now I begin to believe you really love me," said Gabrielle, her

eyes sparkling with joy. "It is time for us to part. The day after to-morrow I hope to be able to bring you this pass at the same hour. Shall I find you here?"

"How can I tell? I may be forced any moment to quit this, my last remaining refuge; I hope not to be discovered by the spies, but, if I am expelled, I will come to the Tuileries gardens the day after to-morrow, and wait for you under the chestnut trees, on the right hand of the wide avenue."

"I will be there, and if I do not see you—"

"You will find me in this room, where you have brought me a happiness I never expected."

Gabrielle held out her hand, and he covered it with kisses.

"Good-bye," said she abruptly, afraid of protracting this perilous situation. "Show me the way out." St. Victor's eyes showed how hard he felt it to part with the adorable creature whose dazzling beauty irradiated his miserable lodging, but he could not think of making her repent having trusted him.

"Come," said he, and he preceded her down the worn stairs, and tapped lightly on the sliding panel below. They had to wait three or four minutes before it moved and revealed Tamerlane's lanky form.

"Pardon me, fair lady," said he, bowing like a poplar in the breeze. "May the gods punish the stupid individual, who, by demanding a ticket for the drawing at Toulouse, reduced me to the cruel necessity of leaving you behind the panel for a minute or two."

"Hold your tongue and make haste," said St. Victor, impatiently.

"Don't be alarmed. The street-door is bolted," returned Tamerlane. Gabrielle took the hand he gallantly offered, turned a last glance of entreaty upon Valréas, crossed the office, and unbolting the door, went out.

"Now," said St. Victor, leaping into the shop and closing the panel behind him, "shoot that bolt, so as to give me time to dress."

Tamerlane hastened to obey, while the lieutenant glided under his desk and drew out a costume and head-dress. These consisted of a wide wadded purple silk pelisse, an enormous cocked hat very old-fashioned in shape and a pair of blue spectacles. In a trice the pelisse was over his hunting-coat, the cocked hat over his eyes, and the spectacles on his nose, and he might have been taken for an elderly bookworm on his way from the granary which contained the relics of the library of the St. Geneviève abbey. To complete the delusion, he took a stick from a corner, and began to hobble to the door like a decrepit old man.

"Are you going out?" asked Tamerlane.

"Yes, to George's. I must speak to him."

"The Quai de Chaillot is a long way off. Do be prudent."

"All right! Set me an example by sitting down again before your desk. If your lottery customers find you frisking about the office, they are sure to suspect you. Who was here just now?"

"Oh, a poor devil of a glazier who came to stake three francs on a triplet, more than he will earn in a day by putting in window-panes. What fools these Parisians are to enrich Bonaparte's treasury after this fashion!" exclaimed the philosopher, as he resumed his seat sadly. "If you should come across that ill-licked eub Malabry," added he, sighing, "tell him that I am dying to see him."

"I will not fail to do so. Good-bye for the present and be on your guard," replied St. Victor, as he passed out. The street looked as quiet

as usual, and he thought the shortest and safest way of reaching George's house would be through the Place Maubert and along the quays, where he was not likely to come across any one but fish-wives and ragmen. He was just turning down the street, when his quick ear caught sound of a cry familiar enough in Paris, and he espied a glazier, evidently the man who had just invested three francs in a lottery-ticket, sitting on the opposite side of the street, leaning his back against the wall of an old house. "What does that man expect to do in this neighbourhood," thought he, "where three fourths of the windows are found to do perfectly without any glass at all?"

At the same time he felt a vague suspicion, but reasoned himself out of it. The glazier was not bestowing the slightest notice on him; Gabrielle had already disappeared, and he himself began to make his way towards the Seine with a marvellous imitation of the tottering walk of an infirm old man. He showed a marvellous power of self-control, absorbed as he was in his delight at having seen Gabrielle again, while at the same time he realized more than ever the desperate nature of his position.

The treachery of Bouvet de Lozier, who had turned spy to save his own miserable existence, had deprived the conspirators of their last chance of escape. This man, it was true, had arrived but recently from England, and did not know where his accomplices lodged, but he had given an exact description of each, and now that Picot, George's servant, had just been arrested in a café, the leader's retreat might be discovered. This made St. Victor so anxious to warn Cadoudal and suggest his using the pass which Gabrielle was hoping to obtain. He walked at tolerable speed, though his steps were short, and when he reached the line of quays, he found them almost deserted, as a north-east wind was blowing and bringing with it occasional storms of rain and hail. He was about to venture on making himself look a little more juvenile, when the happy idea occurred to him of turning round, as if overpowered by a sudden gust. There, not twenty yards behind him, at the other end of the quay, walked the glazier who had just been uttering his shrill cry near the lottery office! He was walking silently and slowly now. It might be chance after all that made this man follow the same route as himself, so St. Victor tottered on as before, till he reached the end of the Quai des Augustins, when turning again, he saw the glazier advancing by the Pont St. Michel. This augured badly for St. Victor, who walked on however till he could shelter under the arcades of the Rue de la Seine. There he paused, and saw the man also sheltering and looking at the sky, as if to see whether the storm were likely to continue.

St. Victor determined to find out whether the man were really a spy or not by moving on when a heavy shower came. He had not to wait long before a black cloud brought a perfect deluge, when he crossed the street instead of crawling along by the houses. When he next turned there was the glazier still behind him; he knew now that he must be one of Fonché's spies, and concluded that he did not arrest him on the spot because he knew where to find him on some future occasion, and was now hoping to track him to the haunts of some other conspirator. The question was how to get rid of this man, but when he arrived on the Quai Voltaire, he had thought of a means, as he caught sight of an enormous boat moored to the river bank, which somewhat resembled the old woodcuts of Noah's Ark.

He ran promptly down the muddy bank to the wooden bridge leading to

this boat, which was Vigier's Baths, well-known to St. Victor, who had often used them. As he ran, he could see the glazier quickening his steps in the hope of cutting off his escape by the river. 'Run as hard as you like,' said he to himself, 'with that frame on your back you will not gain admission without a parley at the door, so I shall have time enough to out-wit you.'

The proprietor of the baths took great pains to manage them well and maintain their popularity: a certain number of baths were always kept ready, and the attendants were prompt and obliging. St. Victor had reckoned on this, and as he entered, the clouds of steam issuing from their open doors showed that they were ready to be occupied. He threw down a gold coin as he entered, and without asking for change, made for the nearest of these baths. The attendant, seeing this unusual liberality, was at once inspired with respect for the venerable gentleman, and made a low bow, asking at the same time whether he could be of any assistance. St. Victor replied that he would ring, and closed the door, which opened from the inside, and was furnished with a strong bolt. Having taken this precaution, he ran to the window, and saw that it would be easy to leap out into the Seine. He then removed the pelisse which would have fettered his movements, and threw it into a corner. He next removed his hunting-coat, waist-coat, and shirt, keeping on only his doe-skin breeches and top-boots. He rolled the rest of his clothing into a compact bundle which he meant to fasten on his head, and while thinking how to keep it dry, caught sight of a piece of oil-cloth laid on the floor as a mat, which seemed just the very thing to roll it up in. While thus engaged, he heard a sound of hasty steps in the corridor, and a lively dialogue going on just outside the door of his room.

"You shall not enter, I say," cried the attendant. "What business can a glazier have here?"

"I am no glazier," returned the man with the frame, "I am an agent of the Minister of Police, and I command you to open the door of this room."

"There is nothing here for the police to see," replied the attendant. "There is no one inside but an elderly gentleman, and I shall not allow you to disturb him. Come, be off with you!"

"But, you fool, your elderly gentleman is a Chouan, an accomplice of George Cadondal's, and by assisting him, you are running the risk of spending five years in chains! Have not you read the proclamation which is on every wall?"

"If I were sure of that," murmured the other.

"Open it and you will be convinced—besides putting a hundred francs into your pocket."

"That sounds tempting! But I have not the key, and the door is bolted inside."

"Yes, and the bolt is a strong one," said St. Victor to himself, as he secured the bundle firmly to his hat by means of his neckcloth.

"Help me to break it open and you shall have another hundred francs," resumed the spy.

This magnificent offer evidently decided the attendant, for two vigorous kicks followed, the door however did not yield. St. Victor opened the window softly, and swinging by the bar outside, dropped into the river beneath. He swam like a fish, and could brave the icy temperature of the Seine. In a few seconds, the force of the stream had carried him some yards away from the boat, and he made no effort to resist it or cross the

river, only keeping the head erect in order not to lose his bundle. He knew that the door must soon be forced open, and that if he was seen in the middle of the stream, a hue and cry would at once be raised. His best chance was to hide himself behind the buttresses of the Pont Royal, and just as he got under the first arch, he could hear the distant cry of his persecutor on finding the bird flown.

"He must believe I am at the bottom of the Seine," thought St. Victor, as he struck out. "This is my time to land. He will not seek for me on this bank, at any rate."

The spot he chose was most favourable for his purpose, for the bank was clothed with willows and alders which served as a screen, and a few hats or umbrellas were the only things visible above the parapets of the bridge.

The Chouan landed, and unfastening his bundle at the foot of a tree, dressed with all speed. His leather breeches and boots were soaked, but this might pass for the effects of a drenching in the storm; his other clothes were fairly dry; the cocked hat was all that remained of the elderly man, and St. Victor directed his steps towards the quay, intending to dart down one of the narrow streets which open upon it.

On reaching the top of the bank, he found himself just in front of the main entrance to the barracks occupied by the picked gendarmerie, but as he glanced towards the Quai Voltaire, the first thing he saw was the wretched glazier running as hard as he could! St. Victor's ingenious stratagem had only landed him in the lion's jaws. Flight was impossible, for the gendarmes would have been instantly attracted by the shouts of the police agent, yet it was necessary to take some step. The barracks stood before him, the wide gateway opening upon an inner court where some of the men were rubbing down their horses, while the sentinel stood in his box, leaning on his gun and looking alternately at the black sky and the man who stood so heedless of the torrents of rain. St. Victor was almost thinking of giving himself up voluntarily to this brave soldier, in order to escape the shame of being captured by one of Fouché's ignoble agents, when he caught sight of an officer in undress, standing at a window on the first floor, smoking his pipe. It was Major Robert.

"Come, this is my last chance, let us try it," murmured he, as if in answer to an idea that had shot through his brain. He crossed the quay promptly and entered the barracks; the spy was not twenty yards off. "I want to speak to Major Robert," said he to a man seated in the vestibule.

"Left staircase in the courtyard, seventh door in the corridor on the first floor," returned the man, without troubling himself to rise.

The Chouan darted at once under the arcade, and mounted the wide stone staircase, taking four steps at a time. He ran along the first corridor and soon found himself in front of the seventh door, which bore Major Robert's name. He did not stay to knock, the key was in the lock, so he entered, closed the door behind him, and seeing a great bolt, shot it to ensure himself at any rate a hearing. The officer turned on hearing the sound, and felt some curiosity mingled with surprise to see who could be entering and barricading himself in so carelessly. St. Victor took off his hat and advanced towards him. His spectacles had been left behind in the baths, so there was nothing to disguise his face, which François Robert had seen too often on the Dieppe road to mistake.

The Major's first impulse on recognising the young Chouan was naturally to seize his sabre which was lying on a chair within reach, for one of George's soldiers was not likely to appear thus before one of Bonaparte's

without hostile intentions, but St. Victor folded his arms and said quietly :
 " You will not need it, Major. I am unarmed."

" What brings you here ?" thundered the Major.

" I am come to ask for the hand of your sister, Mademoiselle Gabrielle Robert," replied Cadoudal's lieutenant in his softest voice.

" What do you mean ?"

" The simple truth. I love Mademoiselle Gabrielle and long to marry her, but I am come also to beg for my life."

" How dare you mock me thus ? Your impudence deserves—"

Here two rude knocks at the door cut short the officer's vehement apostrophic. He looked at the young Chouan and advanced towards the door. " The man outside is one of Fouché's spies, ready to arrest me," said St. Victor, dropping his voice.

The Major took another step forward. " He saw me enter the barracks," resumed St. Victor : " he suspects that I have taken refuge here, and has come to arrest me in your rooms."

The officer paused. " I thought I should be safe under the roof of a loyal enemy, and that brought me here," murmured St. Victor.

The Major reddened, and his fingers played with the sash of his sabre. The knocking became more violent. " On the service of the First Consul," said a voice in the corridor. " Please open the door."

François Robert pointed suddenly to a door leading into an inner room, and said roughly : " Go in there."

The lieutenant bowed, and walked in on tiptoe, demonstrating his confidence in his host by not even closing the door. The Major opened the other, and found himself face to face with a man in workman's clothes.

" Do you not recognize me, Major ?" said this individual, affecting to smile.

" I know you perfectly," returned Robert, coldly ; " you are in Fouché's employ, and once accompanied me on the road to Malmaison. What do you want here ?"

" I am in pursuit of a Chouan, Major," returned the spy, trying to wriggle through the door as it stood ajar.

Robert frustrated this move, and said in anything but an encouraging tone : " What has this pursuit to do with your appearance here ?"

" Why, Major, the Chouan has taken refuge in these barracks, and the sentry I questioned said he had gone up to your rooms."

" The man was mistaken. I have seen no one, and think you have taken a great liberty in coming here."

" But, Major—"

" Who authorized you to cry, ' On the service of the First Consul,' when you are employed merely by the police ?"

" I had no right to do it, I own, Major, but it was meant for the best. I am an honest man, and have been in the public service for nearly thirty years ; you can ask M. Fouché about me."

" I have nothing to ask, and I tell you again there is no one here."

" And yet," stammered the disconcerted Caillotte, " I thought—I fancied I had just heard a second voice."

" What ? Dare you dispute my word ? Begone this instant or I shall cut off your ears," cried François Robert, who was ready to vent his anger on some one.

" I am going, sir," said Caillotte, suddenly changing his tone. " No doubt I was mistaken, and I am going straight to M. Fouché to report—"

"Go to the devil if you choose, and never set foot here again. We are all soldiers in this place." And the Major closed his door in the face of the spy, who ran off at full speed. The officer drew the bolt again and returned to his prisoner, who was standing motionless just within the inner room. "Now we are by ourselves," exclaimed François Robert.

"First, let me thank you," said St. Victor, calmly. "I expected as much, and feel glad to be indebted to you for such an important service."

"I render no services to the enemies of France, and—"

"Excuse me, Major, I am not the enemy of France, but of Bonaparte."

"We will not enter into discussions. I was determined to show you that I had no connection with Fouché's spies, but you cannot expect me to listen to your insolent proposals."

"I expect nothing, I am going," said St. Victor, making for the door.

"But that spy is no doubt lying in wait for you outside!" exclaimed François Robert.

"No matter! He will not arrest me here, and so your honour will be safe," said St. Victor, gravely.

"What have you to do with my honour?" retorted the officer, white with rage.

"Nothing, I confess, but I feel that I should be making but a poor return for your noble conduct if I remained here to compromise you. That spy has no doubt left some one to watch these barracks while he has gone to the Minister of Police to get a formal order for my arrest. I should prefer to spare you the annoyance of having it take place here."

"And how do you know it is not in my power to save you?" asked François Robert. "I have not forgotten that my life was once in your hands."

"You owe me nothing for having prevented a brutal soldier from assassinating you."

"I thought he was your friend, or, at any rate, acting under your orders."

"That is true. In civil war, we cannot choose our allies."

"I am a servant of the Republic and General Bonaparte, and have nothing to do with the morals of a Chouan, but I intend my sister to marry some one worthy of her, and you will never be that man." St. Victor made no reply. "I forbid you to think of her," resumed the exasperated Major.

"I know I can never be her husband, because I am going to lay down my life for the king," said the lieutenant, haughtily, "but you cannot prevent me from loving her."

"Your impudence knows no bounds. Do you suppose I shall allow a Chouan, who fights against his country, and who once tried to drown me, to tell me to my face that he loves my sister?"

"The police will rid you of my presence in another quarter of an hour. I only wish to remark that at the period to which you allude, I had not yet had the pleasure of making Mademoiselle Robert's acquaintance. Since then, her brother has been sacred in my eyes, and I shall neither resist his sword now, nor attempt to escape if I am arrested."

François Robert flung down the weapon he still held in his hand.

"The hour for feigned names is gone by," continued the Chouan, "and I no longer wish to be known to you as Valréas, but Jean Baptiste Coster de St. Victor, first lieutenant to George Cadoudal."

"Unhappy man!" cried the Major. "How dare you tell me your name? Do not you know that Gabrielle—"

"Loves me, you mean?"

"I mean that if she dies of grief, her death will lie at your door."

"Heaven knows I never have sought to make her share my sad fate. I would sacrifice anything in my power to counteract her fatal love for me, much as I adore her. My life is no longer mine to give, but I would sacrifice even my honour, and consent to pass for a traitor."

The warmth and sincerity of these words touched Robert, and he exclaimed: "Well then, abandon a lost cause and come over to us. Help us to lay hands on the villains who want to assassinate the First Consul and then—"

"You misapprehend me," said St. Victor haughtily. "I might consent to *pass* for a traitor in order to save a woman, but I shall never *become* one."

"Do you know," asked the Major coldly, "that you are outlawed, and have nothing to hope, unless you come with me to General Bonaparte?"

"What! Can you despise me sufficiently to advert to that again?"

"Who is requiring you to betray your confederates? I know you to be brave, for I have seen you in peril, and the General is fond of brave men. If you were to ask him to allow you to fight for France—"

"For the Emperor, you mean."

"He might perhaps give you your epaulettes," resumed the Major, taking no notice of the interruption, "and," added he in a whisper, "you might spare an unhappy girl the pain of learning you died on the scaffold."

St. Victor turned deadly pale. "I have sworn to serve only my lawful king," said he after a pause. "I must keep my oath, but I can let myself be killed instead of captured. Mademoiselle Robert does not know my real name, and may believe that I have succeeded in escaping to England."

"Then you refuse to sacrifice what you choose to call your honour?"

"You are a soldier yourself, how would you act in my place?" asked the lieutenant, fixing his eyes on the gendarme. François Robert looked down and made no reply.

"You see, Major, I must die," said the young Chouan simply. "When I leave here, I shall run towards the river, and they will fire on me, for the spy has had time to go to Fouché and return by now. One of the bullets will send me to the bottom of the Seine, and you can tell your sister that Charles Valréas has disappeared for ever."

"And now, in return, let me ask you whether you suppose I have forgotten the Black Leg, and shall let the enemy who once had me at his mercy perish beneath my eyes?"

St. Victor was silent.

"No," returned Robert, "you shall not be taken here. Follow me." And the officer opened a door concealed in the wainscoting, which led to a spiral staircase. The young Chouan hesitated; he would rather have yielded up his life at once, but he reflected that he might still be of some use to George, so he preceded the Major down the stairs and along a narrow passage in the thick wall, till they reached a fair sized cellar lighted through a loophole.

"No one will look for you here, and you can remain till it is night," said the officer curtly. "The door you see before you opens into the Rue de Lille, and the watchman for this district is stationed at the opposite end, so you can easily go out without being observed. The police agents know nothing about this cellar, and they are likely to come to me before making any search elsewhere. I shall know how to receive them. Here is the key; use it when it suits you."

St. Victor took it and thanked him. François Robert hesitated a few seconds; his eyes betrayed what was passing within his mind. "We are even now. Farewell," said he abruptly, as he turned quickly away. St. Victor made no effort to detain him. He felt a little humiliated at owing his present deliverance to the gendarme officer, but he knew that by day-break he should be forced to provide for his own safety. His hopes of saving Cadoudal were almost extinguished, for it was most unlikely that Gabrielle would obtain a blank passport from her brother, now that he knew the real name of the man she loved.

The refuge which he had hoped to place at Cadoudal's service was of no avail now, as it was doubtless known to the spy who had tracked him. He thought too of Gabrielle, and determined to avoid any step that might compromise her; unluckily, matters had become so complicated that he would be forced to meet her under the Tuileries chestnuts in order to prevent her going again to the lottery office. Weary of brooding over the various dangers to which he was exposed, the young Chouan resolved to sleep, hoping that his faculties would be sharpened by the rest he so greatly needed after his immersion in the icy waters of the Seine. He lay down on the hard floor of the cellar, and slept, as he had often done on the heather, on the eve of a battle.

When he awoke, he found it was night, and time for him to depart, though he scarcely knew where to go, unless he could find George and warn him against appearing in the Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève. It was a wet night, and the sentry was in his box; no one saw him pass out; in twenty minutes he had reached the house on the Quai Chaillot, and looked cautiously around. In approaching it, he had passed a pile of timber which some builder had placed on a piece of waste ground, and for a moment he fancied he saw a figure moving in the shadow of this pyramid, but after waiting in vain to see whether there was really any one there, he thought he must have been mistaken, and went to a little side door just opposite the stack of timber, where he prepared to give the necessary signal, which began by giving the screech of an owl three times, pausing between each cry, and then two short knocks, to be followed after the lapse of several seconds by two rather louder. He had however only hooted and knocked twice, when a strong hand was laid on his throat.

St. Victor was as agile as he was strong, and always had his wits about him. He kicked out at once behind, while at the same time he wriggled so adroitly that his assailant's fingers only grasped his cravat. "Villain!" cried he, turning round on his antagonist, whom he suddenly discovered to be Malabry, just relaxing his hold as he found out the mistake he had made.

"What, is it you?" growled St. Victor. "Are you a fool or demented?"

"No, but I took you for a spy. All our signals are known now."

"Well, but what were you doing here?"

"I came to warn George, but he has taken wing already. I found no one here but that man of the cable, who had been left to burn all the papers and close every door. He was just making off with that great dog of his when I knocked."

"It was a mistake to take the animal with him; it is too well known. You should have told him so."

"I did, but he told me not to trouble myself about him, for all was lost, and every man had to look to himself now. The General had not told him where he was going; all he knew about it was, that Cadoudal had de-

terminated not to return there again, but to go on from one comrade to another, and never sleep twice in the same house."

"Ah," said St. Victor sadly, "he will not do that long without being captured. Is he gone all alone?"

"No, Léridan, the young fellow who came to us from London the last time our friends landed, came to fetch him in his cab. He had something to do with horses down at Vannes, and so he has bought a horse and vehicle, and turned cabman."

"Not a bad idea! But I hope he will not think of bringing him to my quarters, or he will be caught. I dare not venture near the place, even to warn Tamerlane, who is sure to be arrested unless he has gone home and has the sense to keep quiet."

"I will go to his lodgings to-night and warn him if he is there. I wish one knew where to find the General."

"We must wait; nothing can be done just now when all the police are about. Can you take me in for the night?"

"To be sure. Let us be going, and in less than an hour—"

A sharp whistle suddenly broke the silence around; it came from the quay. "We are too late, I fear," said St. Victor under his breath, as he grasped his comrade's arm. They darted at once towards the Champs-Élysées, but had only advanced a few steps when they caught sight of a black line moving towards them. It was a cordon of soldiers.

"Behind the house there must still be a free passage," whispered St. Victor.

"Let us try," muttered Malabry, but they had not gone far in that direction before they saw another detachment standing within a few yards of the wall of the yard. "There is no exit left but the quay and the river," said the lieutenant, and they retraced their steps, only to see, by the light of one of the street lamps, bayonets gleaming on that side also. They were caught in a trap.

"Come here," said Malabry, "there may yet be time," and he dragged his friend towards the pile of planks, which were symmetrically arranged so as to form a kind of square tower with a hole in the centre and a narrow platform at each corner. The topmost planks were only about fifteen feet from the ground, and Malabry climbed nimbly to the top and helped his comrade up. They lay flat and waited.

"Halt!" cried the voice of an officer, as the troops approached the pile of timber. "Light the torches!"

"This will spoil all!" whispered St. Victor. The glow shed on the scene soon enabled him to see that the man who led the police was the pretended glazier. The soldiers were, as he had supposed, the picked gendarmes, but it was a relief to find their commanding officer was not François Robert.

"Let me remind you, Captain," said the spy, "that our orders are not to fire on these Chouans except at the last extremity. We want to take them alive."

"All right," rejoined the officer coldly. "Attend to your business. I shall do my duty."

It was evident that the brave soldier did not care to be mixed up in a police affair, and only intended to carry out the commands of his military superiors.

"To your places!" cried the spy to his own men. "Two torches in

front of the little door, two on the quay, two at the foot of the eminence behind the house, and two here in reserve for the Captain."

The torch-bearers were dispersing in different directions and the two Chouans beginning to breathe again, when a soldier stepped from the ranks, and saluting his officer, said: "Excuse me, Captain, but there is some one up yonder." And he pointed with his bayonet to the summit of the pile of planks.

"Ah! So there is!" exclaimed the officer.

"Oh!" said the police agent, rubbing his hands, "I believe there are two of them. Half our task is done already. Bring the torches and let us have a look."

"It is all over. We are done for," said St. Victor fiercely.

"Do you mean to surrender?" asked Malabry.

"No, they shall not take me alive."

As soon as the light of the torches fell full on them, the spy exclaimed, "That is my man from the baths!"

"Why, they are the two Chouans of the ford!" said the gendarme, who had first espied them, none other than Corporal Barbot himself.

"Surrender, brigands!" cried Caillotte.

"Certainly," said Malabry, "only you must reach us first, my fine fellow." And the Hercules, who had risen to his knees on one of the angles of his fortress, seized the end of a plank in his robust hands. St. Victor rose to his feet, ran to the other end of the pile, folded his arms, and shouted out:

"Order your men to fire, Captain. I wish to fall like a soldier. Why do you hesitate? I am Coster de St. Victor, first lieutenant to George Cadoudal, and I came to France on purpose to kill your General, Bonaparte. If you have any mercy in you, order them to fire."

The officer turned to give a signal to his soldiers, but the spy caught his arm, and said breathlessly: "Remember the orders, Captain. We are to take them alive."

"Who will volunteer to climb up and capture these men?" asked the officer.

"I will, Captain," answered Barbot. "I am not afraid of pyramids, since I climbed to the top of the great one in Egypt to plant our flag on it." And the intrepid corporal began to make use of his hands and feet to scale the wooden stage, three gendarmes accompanying him. They were all, however, knocked down by the topmost plank, which Malabry's strong hands threw upon their heads, and the unlucky Egyptian, who had once ascended Cheops' tomb and met with no accident, now had his skull fractured. The officer instantly issued orders to all his men to climb up each side of the pile and seize the two Chouans.

"Crack my skull and then blow out your own brains," said St. Victor to Malabry.

"I have no pistols," replied the latter, "but I can do something better than that. Come here," said he, leaping down the cavity in the centre of the stack. St. Victor followed and asked what he was going to do.

"Play them a trick that our old parish priest taught me when he catechised us," said the old Chouan; "I shall serve them as Samson did the Philistines." He had already stationed himself in an angle, with his feet resting against one side and his back against the other, and was pushing with all his might. A shout of triumph came from the soldiers who had just scaled the pyramid, and ten gendarmes leaped down into the hole.

"Farewell, St. Victor," cried Malabry. "Perish Samson and all his company!"

His voice was drowned by a frightful crash, as the stack of timber, shaken to its base, fell like an avalanche, burying both Chouans and gendarmes.

XIII.

ON the day but one after the catastrophe on the Quai de Chaillot, Gabrielle Robert, who had risen at daybreak, was awaiting her brother. She knew that this day must decide her destiny; she had promised to give a definite answer to the brave captain who had asked for her hand, and she hoped to coax her brother into giving her a passport, by which she might yet save Charles Valréas, even though it should be bought by her consent to the marriage he wished.

After all, she told herself, her brother would never force her to keep her word, nor Captain Perlier either, if she went on her knees to him and begged him to release her from her promise, and she persuaded herself that any stratagem by which she might save a life must be excusable. If the proscription hanging over the young Chouan's head could never be removed, she had one last refuge, she could enter a convent. She still believed Valréas to be in safety, and hoped both to take him the passport and to learn from him where she might find Louise Maneheu, in order to thank, and, if possible, help her.

When the Major entered, she threw herself on his neck, and he embraced her as tenderly as ever, but she soon saw that his usually bright face was overshadowed, and its open expression had changed to one of anxiety and reserve, which seemed to augur ill for her.

"What is the matter, brother?" asked she affectionately.

"Nothing, my dear little sister," muttered he, absently.

"You look as if you had a secret, and were afraid of betraying it," said Gabrielle, accustomed to read the officer's frank countenance like an open book.

"You are mistaken," said he, impatiently. "You know that I have come to ask for your answer."

Gabrielle turned pale, and said in stifled tones: "I am sure now that he is not dead."

"Who?" asked François Robert, brusquely.

"The man who spared your life, saved mine, and received my promise."

Gabrielle expected to hear her brother again maintain that the young Chouan was drowned, but he only frowned, and asked:

"How do you know this man is living?"

"Why should I not own the truth? I have seen him."

"Seen him. Impossible!"

"I saw him yesterday," repeated Gabrielle, "in the retreat where he is in hiding."

"Unhappy girl, how could you do it? Do you wish to forfeit your good name?"

"Forgive me! I love him," murmured the young girl, as she fell down before him.

The Major's first impulse was to repulse her, but his fraternal affection

soon got the better of his anger. He raised Gabrielle in his arms, kissed her brow, and said, with deep emotion : "This is the first grief you have caused me, you do not know how much I feel it. Look at my eyes ; it is fifteen years since they have been moist with tears."

She tried to embrace him, but he put her gently aside, saying :

"Tell me all. I must know exactly what happened, how you came to discover—"

"I learned where he lodged," broke in Gabrielle, "from a woman to whom he had taken me on the evening we first met at Tivoli ; she told me the street, and how to gain admittance. He has found a refuge in the quarter—"

"Tell me nothing about that. But was this the day before yesterday, just after the conversation we had together?"

"Yes, François. I had resolved to give you an answer to-day, and Heaven is my witness that if I had found he was dead, I should have tried to comply with your wishes. But I wanted to know my fate."

"I do not ask what passed between you ; but what time was it when you left him?"

"About noon, I believe."

"Then that was it," murmured the officer to himself.

"What do you mean?" asked Gabrielle anxiously.

"That some spy followed you, and thus discovered the Chouan's retreat. Within two hours he was trying to escape by throwing himself into the Seine, and passing along the Quai d'Orsay, where he saw me at a window in the barracks, he came to seek refuge in my quarters."

"And could you turn him away, and not let him find it?" asked Gabrielle hastily.

"What do you take me for? Of course, I ought to have had him arrested, but I did not. I had a debt of gratitude to discharge ; I am glad it is paid, and now we are quits."

"Did you conceal him?"

"I confess I felt inclined to send him away, but while we were parleying, the spy knocked at my door to claim his prey, and I was not going to deliver him up, so I led him down a secret staircase, to a cellar leading into the Rue de Lille, and gave him the key of the door. He remained there all day, and left when night came."

"Thank you, François—thank you on his behalf—and—on mine," stammered the girl through her tears.

"You need not thank me. I acted as I was bound to do. Still, I fear the business has placed me on Fouché's black books. Half-an-hour later, his spy returned, escorted by half-a-dozen police, and wanted to hunt through the barracks. I refused to let them in, and went off at once to Fouché ; we had a lively altercation, and I should not be surprised if he denounced me to the First Consul. I do not care much, for Bonaparte knows me too well to require me to do anything dishonourable, and he knows my devotion to his person. Still, I believe I am under a cloud just now ; Bonaparte knows the story of the Black Leg, and he never forgets anything. I would bet anything I shall not be employed again against Cadondal's followers."

"Heaven be praised!" murmured Gabrielle.

"The proof of it is," resumed the officer, "that two nights ago, George's house at Chaillot was surrounded by troops, and some Chouans captured. A detachment of my battalion was despatched there ; not, however, under

my command, but under that of one of my subordinate officers. I do not yet know exactly what happened. Still, you see, my dear Gabrielle, that though I have compromised myself for the man who spared my life at Mal-maison, he must fall, sooner or later, into the hands of the police."

Gabrielle turned still paler, and a groan escaped her.

"I promised to tell you the truth, and now you have heard it," continued François Robert, vainly striving to conceal his emotion. "I deplore the infatuation which led you to visit a conspirator, an enemy of France, and I hope your eyes will now be opened to the consequences of such thoughtless conduct. I have not the heart to reproach you, and shall wait till you have returned to your senses before I talk to you again about marrying."

"But what will become of him?" demanded Gabrielle.

"He will share the fate of all rebels, and though that fate is terrible, I feel sure that he will face it bravely. Why did not he choose a better cause to serve? I tried to win him over, and bitterly regret my want of success. I would have saved him if I could, I assure you."

"You can still save him from the scaffold," said Gabrielle promptly. "You know that I have talked with him, and heard his plans and hopes. As you have just said, he is ready to die for his king and will not betray the cause he serves. Still, he knows all is lost, and I wrung from him a promise not to bear arms again against his country, but to consent to live peaceably abroad."

"That might do if he were out of France," said the soldier sadly, "but how is he to get out of the country?"

"You could procure him a passport," murmured Gabrielle.

François Robert stood up, coloured, and said severely: "You cannot be aware that you are proposing I should betray my country and break my oath of allegiance. But even were I so disposed, it does not lie in my power to issue such passports."

"Yet your soldiers pass the barriers."

"Yes, when they are on service outside, but they require to be in uniform, and furnished with a card bearing their name and number. Even my orderly had to show his yesterday in order to get to Mal-maison."

"If he has a pass," exclaimed Gabrielle, "Charles might be saved by using it, if he could get a uniform."

"My dear Gabrielle," said the officer, endeavouring to keep calm, "do you know to what I should expose myself if I were weak enough to yield to what you suggest? To be tried by court-martial, and be sentenced, at least, to degradation and expulsion from the army, to say nothing of the penalty of five years in chains, according to the provisions of this new act, for having favoured the escape of one of Cadoudal's comrades. Will you still insist? Do you think more of this Chouan's life than your brother's honour?"

Gabrielle hung down her head, and could make no reply at first. She quivered, and great tear-drops rolled down her cheeks.

"I would not ask you to risk anything," stammered she, "if I were not convinced that no one would ever be the wiser if you connived at this substitution. What harm can there be in helping an obscure soldier to retire from the battle-field, when he is ready, as Charles Valréas is, to lay down his arms?"

"An obscure soldier indeed! I must tell you the real name of your

supposed Valréas. It is Coster de St. Victor, Cadoudal's first lieutenant, and the most dangerous of the band after his leader."

"St. Victor! Impossible! Can Charles have deceived me?" exclaimed Gabrielle, quite overcome by this terrible revelation. "Who told you his name was St. Victor?"

"He himself. I believe he even gloried in it."

"Ah," murmured the girl, "I read his name at the head of the list of proscriptions, and knew not it was his. If he is taken, there is no hope of his being pardoned, is there?"

"No, no more than his General. Bonaparte could scarcely pardon them if he wished, owing to State reasons."

"Then you see you are the only person who can save him by giving him your orderly's pass."

"By disgracing myself, you mean. Never!"

"Do you refuse to listen to my entreaties?"

"Most decidedly."

"Then all I can do is to die," murmured Gabrielle. She said this so simply, but with such a look of determination that her brother could not help starting. He had been prepared to steel his heart against tears, sobs, and entreaties, but this tenacity of purpose and quiet despair cut him to the quick. He began to try other measures, and to demonstrate to his sister the impossibility of his saving the Chouan's life even if he complied with her request; he even went so far as to say that he would make any sacrifice in his power, but that it would be useless, as they had no means of communicating with St. Victor. To his stupefaction, his sister instantly rejoined that if he would at once get the pass, she would undertake to convey it to the proscribed man, whom she expected to meet under the chestnuts, visible from her window, that very day.

"Go to meet this Chouan, this assassin, in the gardens here, almost under the eyes of the man against whom he has conspired! I regret that I ever took pity on the impudent fellow, and shall leave him to the scaffold he has merited," said François Robert, severely. "I forbid you to go into these gardens."

"I must," pleaded Gabrielle.

"You will not leave your room; I shall lock the door, and station a soldier outside, if necessary."

"You will not do that and condemn me to die," said she, as she approached the window. The officer darted behind her, and was about to seize her in his arms, when the door opened, and in bustled Madame Desrosiers, as brisk and joyous as ever.

"Dear me! What game is that you are playing at?" began she, gaily.

"Excuse me, Madame, said the officer, coldly, "I have some serious business to discuss with Gabrielle, and—"

"You don't want my company, you mean. Oh, well, I am going, I did not come about anything of importance, only to talk over the great news, about which, of course, you know more than I do, since it was your men who made this grand capture."

"I know nothing about it, Madame, and must request you—"

"What? Have you not heard of this great battle with the Chouans?"

"What has taken place?" asked Gabrielle, anxiously.

"Oh, I must tell you, if you have not yet heard," exclaimed the good lady. "Well then, the night before last, the police, aided by a strong

detachment of picked gendarmes, invested the house at Chaillot, occupied by George Cadoudal."

"And did they take him?" asked the Major, interested, in spite of himself, by this information.

"No. Unfortunately the rebel had escaped, and the house was empty, but in a field close by, they found two Chouans, some of the most important in the band."

"Did they make any resistance?"

"A desperate resistance. You cannot have read the papers this morning; nothing else is talked of in Paris. Only fancy, the two scoundrels had climbed to the top of a pile of wood and refused to surrender. The orders were to take them alive, and when the soldiers climbed up, they hurled down planks on them, and killed one man—Barbot, a corporal."

"The villains!" said the officer, clenching his fists.

"At last," resumed Madame Desrosiers, "they took refuge inside their retreat, and just as the gendarmes fell on them, they brought down the whole pile of timber, killing some more men and wounding others."

"And were they themselves killed?"

"No. Terribly bruised, but they were taken alive, and will be tried and guillotined, as they deserve."

"Are their names known?" asked Gabrielle, tremulously.

"Yes. There is one Burban, called Malabry, who is only an obscure rascal, but the other capture is of great importance. They have laid hands on George's first lieutenant—a splendid fellow—the famous Coster de St. Victor."

Gabrielle gave a heart-rending shriek and swooned away.

XIV.

SIX days after the fatal morning when poor Gabrielle had learned so abruptly the arrest of the man she adored, the odious Caillotte was standing in Fouché's cabinet to receive his master's instructions. In spite of the abject air he assumed, there was a look of hope and joy on his face, and his grey eyes glistened with an unusual fire. A cat with the mouse in its claws does not look like the same animal crouching before it makes its capture.

Fouché looked radiant. He was rising into favour again, for General Bonaparte had summoned him to a secret council held at the Tuileries on the night of the 14th of February, after the first revelations made by Bouvet de Lozier. He was the only one present who had always maintained that George was in Paris, and this was now absolutely proved. The First Consul had been forced to acknowledge Fouché's perspicacity, and the supple Jacobin saw himself on the way to regain the portfolio for which nature seemed especially to have adapted him. From that instant, he had taken the field openly, and had done more in three weeks than his predecessors in six months. It was he who had advised Bonaparte to send Savary to Biville with fifty picked gendarmes to endeavour to capture the French prince expected to land. It was he who had urged him at once to arrest Moreau, in spite of the popularity he still enjoyed among his former comrades of the Rhine army. It was he who had purchased the secret of Pichegru's hiding-place, and caused the conqueror of Holland to be captured in his bed by a detachment of his agents. He, too, was urging the First

Consul to violate the frontier in order to seize on the person of a Bourbon and have him shot in cold blood. It was he, too, who had laid snares or organized expeditions by which almost all the Chouans had now been taken. Each day brought tidings of some fresh capture, yet George Cadoudal was still at large, and without having him, Government could not prove either Moreau or Pichegru guilty, or commence proceedings against them in common with the Chouans.

Fouché was especially alive to the importance of capturing George; he took no sleep, and was ready at any hour to receive his intelligent spy, Caillotte, when he brought his report. On this day, the 9th March, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, he was giving him his second audience that day, and cross-questioning him sharply, as usual. He elicited that the spy was almost certain that George passed from one friend's house to another, never sleeping two nights in the same, as he had still many allies in Paris, who, though too timid to join in a conspiracy, would not refuse him temporary shelter.

"Well," said Fouché, "but to transfer himself from one to another, he must pass through the streets. Your people must be a set of asses not to nab him on the way."

"My lord, I am almost certain now that he always drives."

"Indeed! What makes you think so?"

"I have heard something from the driver of a public conveyance, the same man who warned us of the ambuscade on the road to Malmaison. He is ready to serve us if we pay him, and yesterday he brought me word that he had been drinking in the same tavern with a cabman whom he had reason to suspect. He watched this man, and saw him pick up, in the middle of the street, some one corresponding to the description of George."

"And did he not follow him? Or shout, and get him arrested?"

"Oh, he does nothing himself, he has not spirit enough. But he took the number of the cab; it was 53. I have sent to inquire, and find that cab was bought recently by a young man apparently from the provinces, who offered cash and gave a false address."

"That must be it! The cab must be found to-day."

"So it shall, my lord; but if there is no one in it but the driver, I should humbly suggest not to have it arrested, but only watched. I feel confident of apprehending George in another two or three days."

"In the cab?"

"Possibly, but more likely in one of the traps we have laid in the Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève and the Rue des Prouvaires. When he has exhausted all his other hiding-places, he will have to come to these."

"The Rue des Prouvaires is where Sourdat lives, is it not?"

"Yes, my lord. I always suspected he was playing a double game, and now I am convinced of it. You may remember that I caught Major Robert's sister talking to the woman who is living at Sourdat's, and that the latter gave her St. Victor's address."

"That only proves that this woman keeps up her connection with the Chouans. It does not follow that Sourdat knows anything about it."

"I hope soon to be able to prove to you the contrary," said Caillotte with a malicious smile. "Meanwhile, I am keeping watch myself over St. Victor's domicile. I dare not show myself in the Rue des Prouvaires, and have sent four of our men there whose faces are not known to Sourdat."

"Very well. Are you going straight on from here to the Rue de la Montagne-Ste-Geneviève?"

"Yes, and if you have no objection, I mean first to remove this Chouan, who was St. Victor's friend, and comes every day to take charge of this lottery-office. His steps have been watched closely for the last few days; it is evident that he does not know what has become of St. Victor and is still watching for him. I have not disturbed him yet, because I thought he might act as a decoy, but if George presents himself at the place, as I hope, this sham receiver might be in the way, so I propose to remove him and substitute one of our own men."

"Very well, but remember there is to be no disturbance. It will not do to startle the game. For the rest, you can do as you think best. By the way," added he, "have you heard anything yet of the man who kept the *Chant-du-Cog*?"

"No, my lord," said Caillotte, half piteously, "I can learn nothing about him. He and his dog vanished completely after that affair at Rueil, and I almost think they must have left Paris."

"The peasant may have returned to Normandy or Brittany," murmured Fouché, "and after all, his part in the conspiracy was a very subordinate one; we can dispense with him."

"We shall have to do," sighed the agent, who always groaned over any capture he had to renounce. "Still I shall do my best to find him, for if, as I believe, this peasant is that woman's husband, he might help us to—"

"Never mind that now," said Fouché, "we have no time to lose to-day. There is nothing to be got out of that dandy St. Victor, nor out of that other bear who killed three or four gendarmes."

"As to St. Victor," returned Caillotte, "we may find means to unloose his tongue. You are aware that Major Robert's sister dotes on him. Well, if we could make the young lady believe that she could obtain a pardon for her lover by extorting from him certain revelations—"

"Ah, that might be worth trying," said Fouché, licking his lips like a tiger preparing to devour his prey. "This Robert treated me with some insolence the other day, and I see no objection to compromising his sister. Now go about your business."

Caillotte, thus abruptly dismissed, walked out of the room backwards, and retired down a secret staircase which now gave him immediate access to his employer. A comrade was awaiting him on the quay, an ill-dressed fellow, who was sitting on the curb-stone with a knotted cudgel between his legs. His untidy appearance and uncouth manners always annoyed his companion, who began to rate him soundly, though he found him useful in perilous expeditions like the present, on account of his vigorous sinews. He took care, however, to send him on in advance, that his own gentility might not suffer too much from contact with his robust assistant. They took the shortest route to the Rue de la Montage-Ste-Geneviève, where the lottery-office was located in a house at the very top of the steep street, within a dozen yards of the side entrance to the church of St. Etienne-du-Mont. It was in front of this ancient Gothic porch that Caillotte rejoined his comrade Buffet, and four suspicious looking individuals, who had been seated on the steps, rose as they approached. These were the spies whom Caillotte had ordered to meet him there, and before examining them, he glanced cautiously around, and then led the way to a narrow little street skirting the nave of the church, where they were more likely to be secure from prying eyes.

Here one of the four reported that the house had been watched all day, and that no one had entered but poor people about lottery business,

"Very well," said Caillotte. "Now, listen to my orders. You four are to stand along the shop front, and Buffet opposite, to look up and down the street. I shall go in alone, first of all, in order to talk a little with the Chouan and have a look at him. Do not stir as long as all is quiet, but the instant I knock at the window, you are all to rush in and seize the clerk. Have you any cord in your pockets?"

"Yes, and handcuffs and a gag into the bargain."

"Well, then, you must first gag him to prevent his shouting and attracting the neighbours; then bind him like a sausage, and lay him flat on the floor under his desk. I know what he looks like, a tall, thin fellow; your figure is not unlike his, Courtaud, so you must take his coat and cap and install yourself in his place, taking care to pull the peak well over your face. We shall leave you alone with him, but shall remain within call. Try to mimic the fellow's manner; if any Chouans come, as I hope, we want them to be taken in till we have time to catch them in our trap." Then, dismissing them to their places, Caillotte turned to ask Buffet what he thought of his arrangements.

"Not bad," replied the latter. "But I don't see how I am to help you, except by receiving the first blows."

"Nonsense," said Caillotte. "I am stationing you to watch for the Chouans who may come to visit their friend while we are inside. If you see a cab stop before No. 32. or near it, let the occupants get out, and then blow your whistle twice to give me warning. Go and plant yourself with your back to that wall, and if the cab bears the number 53, whistle four times instead of two."

Having thus arranged everything, Caillotte gently opened the door, and glided into the shop. It was half dark, but that did not prevent his recognising the same man he had seen before. Tamerlane had tilted back his rush-bottomed chair; his eyes were fixed on the ceiling and his hands folded, as he carelessly twirled his thumbs and recited to himself a celebrated sonnet once addressed to Madame de Beauharnais by a poet of the *ancien régime*. The spy had entered so noiselessly that he was able to steal up to the desk and rest his elbows on it without the supposed clerk becoming aware of his presence, and he had to cough loudly in order to recall him from his reverie. Tamerlane, startled, tried to resume his usual attitude, but fell forward so suddenly over his desk that the green peaked cap came off.

Caillotte took advantage of this incident to examine the man's face, and as he had an excellent memory, and remembered the description as well as the name of each of George's followers, he soon saw it must be Victor Deville, commonly known as Tamerlane. He might have tapped at the window at once to summon his subalterns, but his nature was that of the cat who likes to play with her victims before she devours them, and he chose to study the unsuspecting Tamerlane a little first.

The poor fellow had been passing a melancholy week. At first he had kept expecting St. Victor to reappear, till public report and then the *Journal des Débats* had informed him of the capture of his two comrades. He knew, too, that George was now homeless, and that some day or other he might come to No. 32 to ask a night's shelter from the brave fruit-seller whose husband usually kept the lottery-office. Tamerlane never thought of his own safety, but remained to secure that of his General; a friend must be there to receive him. Caillotte belonged to the feline, and Tamerlane to the canine race.

"I beg pardon for disturbing you, sir," said the spy in a timid and embarrassed manner.

"Oh, you are not disturbing me in the least," replied the sham clerk as he picked up his cap, "you are doing me a service, for I am rather of an absent turn, and always grateful to those who summon me back from the clouds. What can I do for you?"

"I wished to know the winning numbers of the last drawing in Paris." Saying which, Caillotte fumbled in his pocket for the lottery ticket he had bought at this very office, the day he came disguised as a glazier.

"Ah! you remind me that I ought to have put them up outside. How unlucky it is that one cannot think of everything! A man has already been here who wanted to know the decrees of fate, and his visit ought to have reminded me of my obligations, which—"

"Excuse me, sir, but I came to learn—"

"What were the winning numbers. Just so, and I will show you the official list," said Tamerlane, hunting through the papers displayed on his desk. "No doubt," continued he, "you have sacrificed to the blind goddess Fortune, and hope she has been propitious."

"To be sure, here is my ticket," said Caillotte, exhibiting an oblong piece of greyish-brown paper. "I do not reckon too much on my chances, but still one never knows what may happen; if I have not won, I shall not distress myself."

"You are quite right. True philosophy teaches us to despise riches, and poetry does the same. May I ask on what you staked?"

"On an absolute sequence of three."

"Ah," rejoined Tamerlane, "that means you have given up all expectations based on odd numbers or on two, and that, in order to win, your three numbers must come out in the sequence determined by you beforehand. I see you are bold, for if you gained your sequence, it would bring you in an enormous sum, but 'fortune favours the bold,' and every one knows that 'Gambling shows the greatest freaks of fate.'"

Caillotte contemplated with some curiosity the singular conspirator who dealt so freely in quotations, though he knew a price was set on his head, and began to ask himself whether the man could be in his senses.

"It is true," resumed the imperturbable clerk, as he turned over the leaves of a thick register, "that ambitious attempts often fail, still I would fain believe in your luck till I have proof to the contrary; be so good as to tell me what numbers you chose."

"Here they are," said Caillotte, showing his ticket; "2, 52, and 1."

"Very well. I have found the list at last and we shall soon see if fortune has favoured you. Unluckily the light is beginning to fail, and I can scarcely read the numbers," murmured Tamerlane. "Here, the first number drawn was 81."

"81 does not affect me," rejoined Caillotte, who was beginning to feel amused.

"The second is 2."

"Oh, that is the beginning of my sequence. It is a fair start," said the spy, with a sneer, not having the slightest expectation of an almost impossible prize.

"The third—the third is 52."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Caillotte, flattered, in spite of himself, by this unexpected luck.

"The fourth, oh what a pity! is 38."

"There go my castles in the air!" growled the spy, feeling the disappointment more than he cared to show.

"Wait, there is one more," said Tamerlane. "You have already had two in the order to suit you. If the third does but complete the series, you will be rich. Bother these dull window panes, I cannot see at all," added he, bending over the register. Caillotte, in spite of his assumed indifference, was following his movements with evident interest. Tamerlane suddenly drew himself up, and said in a mock heroic tone: "*Banish, good sir, your feelings of alarm!*"

"What do you mean?" asked Fouché's agent impatiently.

"That the fifth number drawn is 1,—2, 52, 1. You have won your absolute sequence of three!"

"Impossible!" cried the police agent, really excited this time.

"Read it for yourself," said the supposed clerk, putting the list before him.

"It is actually true," murmured Caillotte, turning pale with delight. "My three francs ought to bring me in a fortune. Can you tell me how much I have won?"

"I must confess that as I have only just entered the service I am not well posted in the figures, but I shall soon make it out," said Tamerlane with an embarrassment which alone would have sufficed to betray him. While he was hunting for a printed tariff of the National Lottery, Caillotte was meditating. Gold sometimes works miracles: this unexpected stroke of luck was softening the spy, and caused a humane feeling to germinate, possibly for the first time, in his sordid nature. He told himself that, after all, he should owe this wealth to the unfortunate man he was about to send to the scaffold. Tamerlane had chosen for him the ticket bearing the three lucky numbers, and should he arrest him in return? It seemed monstrous ingratitude, and now that he thought himself rich, he was inclined to be merciful. Having no experience of this patented form of gambling, he imagined he had gained some very important prize.

"Ah, here it is," said Tamerlane. "This paper informs me that a sequence of three gains five thousand five hundred times the amount staked. Your stake was three francs, and so you are entitled to sixteen thousand five hundred francs. A very pretty sum, sir, and I congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Caillotte, already half recovered from his illusion. "But you forget that my sequence of three was *absolute*."

"Ah, just so, I will look again at the lists."

The agent reflected again, but his reflections took a different channel. If he had gained two or three hundred thousand francs, he would have persevered in his laudable intention of allowing the Chouan to escape, and retiring from his vile profession to live respectably on his means. But sixteen thousand, or even thirty thousand, if his absolute sequence should yield as much, was not sufficient to make him inclined to spare his victim.

Night was coming on, and he felt it was time to act. So, leaving the unfortunate Tamerlane to ponder over his books, Caillotte tapped smartly on the window, and the four men waiting outside entered the office and rushed simultaneously on the pretended clerk. Caillotte had drawn aside and was pocketing his ticket, intending to cash it next day at the head-office in the Rue Neuve-des-Petit-Champs. He was one of those who take care never to miss anything.

Tamerlane had looked up when he heard the tapping on the window, and

as soon as he saw the horde of ruffians invade the office, he understood at once what it meant, and rose to receive his assailants. Unfortunately, he had left his pistols at home that day, but he kicked over his rush-bottomed chair, and formed it into a sort of temporary barricade: then he seized a heavy lead inkstand in one hand, and brandishing an enormous ruler in the other, awaited their attack.

The men were unprepared for such a reception, and hesitated. "Quick! Seize him," said Caillotte, stepping forward.

Tamerlane had not divined till that moment that his interrogator was the leader of the band, but this enlightened him. "So you are another, are you?" said he between his teeth. "Take this, you rascal!"

The inkstand flew through the air, and Caillotte had only just time to avoid it by stooping; it caught one of the subalterns behind him in the forehead and cracked his skull. The ink spurted into the employer's face, and he began to swear terribly as he drew back, fearing the ruler. He managed, however, to gulp down his anger, and try a ruse, lest the noise of a contest should attract a crowd and scare away George if he came.

"Surrender! We will do you no harm," cried he.

"Come and take me if you mean to send me to the guillotine," replied Tamerlane, still brandishing his weapon.

"Resistance is useless. Your General, Cadoudal, was arrested this morning," said Caillotte, who always had a lie at command.

"Tell that to the marines," said the Chouan. "Cadoudal is at large, and will break all your heads."

Caillotte felt that his fictions were useless, and that the heroic pedant must be disarmed at any cost. "A hundred francs to the man who seizes him first," he cried, and his crew, excited by the bait, rushed forward altogether.

Tamerlane caught one of them with his ruler, but the two others seized him at the same moment by the throat and legs, and they all rolled to the floor together.

"Well done! pass the cords round, and, above all things, gag him at once to prevent his calling for help," cried the chief. "If George were to arrive now, he would hear the noise and turn his horse's head round directly."

Just as Caillotte was speaking, four successive whistles were heard outside. "It is he!" murmured Caillotte. "Buffet has seen No. 53!" And leaning over the desk under which his men were rolling in the dust with the Chouan, who fought like a lion, he cried: "Finish with him at once! Strangle him rather than let him shout! I shall be back directly. Everything must be as silent as the grave within two minutes."

He then rushed out, nearly knocking down his acolyte, who had crossed the street and planted himself in a convenient nook, where he could see without being seen. Caillotte had noticed this as he entered, and had also thought of occupying it. "Well?" said he, in a low tone, to Buffet.

"There he is!" replied his agent in the same tone.

Caillotte looked down the street and could just distinguish in the gathering twilight the high yellow body of a cab poised on two enormous wheels, the horse climbing slowly up the steep ascent, and two men seated in the vehicle.

"I am sure I read the number, 53, on it just now, when it passed the fruiterer's shop where they are lighting up," said Buffet. "Have they finished inside?"

"I hope so. I told them to strangle the man if they could not silence him any other way."

"They don't seem to have succeeded. Only listen!"

There was indeed a noise of stamping feet, subdued cries, and furniture overturned. Tamerlane was holding his own against three assailants, and the cab was within a few paces. Caillotte had now a good view of its two occupants; the one who held the reins was a small man, the other, on his left, looked enormous, and corresponded with the description of George.

"Those men will spoil all," whispered Buffet.

"I am afraid they will, but if you are as determined as I am to earn the reward, we will capture Cadoudal in spite of them. Let him enter, while we stand quietly here, ready to cut off his retreat. If he gets away, we will follow the cab, and shout till it is stopped by the people in the street."

"All right," said Buffet, "we may get a crack on the skull, but the reward offered is worth it."

The two spies shrank closer into their corner and waited. The noise inside the office was diminishing. The cab stopped in front of the house, not far from the spies' coign of vantage, and they could hear the driver say, "I fancied I heard some cries."

"Pooh!" returned a more sonorous voice, "if the police were there, they would make no noise. Besides, we can listen before entering."

Caillotte's excitement was increasing every minute. "You must have dreamt it, L ridan. There is not a sound," resumed the bass voice.

"I am not quite easy, anyway," said the young cabman. "Take the reins, General, and let me go and reconnoitre. If the *blues* are there, they will lay hands on me, but I am sure to have time to warn you." There was a brief silence. Evidently George had some hesitation as to accepting the proposal of his devoted follower. "Go, and be quick about it," said he at length.

Caillotte started; this arrangement did not suit him at all. He determined on a bold stroke. "Come," whispered he to Buffet. "Let us pass behind the cab, seize the reins, and shout to our men. They must have disposed of the clerk by this time; we shall be five or six of us, more than a match for these two men." The driver was just putting his foot on the step to get down. "Wait till his back is turned," said Caillotte, seizing his companion by the arm. He was just about to dart forward, when a fearful crash was heard. The windows of the office were shivered to atoms, and Tamerlane, who had succeeded in disengaging himself, shouted at the top of his voice: "Be off, comrades! The *blues* are here!"

The courageous fellow had heard the sound of wheels, and thinking it might be George's carriage, sacrificed himself for his friends. The driver darted back to his cab, and instantly whipped up his horse.

"The lazy beggars have let him go!" said Caillotte, and leaving his hiding-place, he opened the door of the office. "Stick to him, you rascals!" cried he. "If you let the Chouan escape, you will all go and rot in the dungeons of Vincennes." Then, returning to Buffet, he said: "Let us run after the carriage and overtake it. Your fortune lies in your legs."

The pair darted off at full speed, having the parting satisfaction of hearing their comrades' shout of triumph on having at last mastered their victim, and Tamerlane's stifled accent, uttering a final quotation as they bound him. Run as they might, the two police agents could not overtake the trotting horse. All they could do was to keep pace with it. They lost ground occasionally, but regained it when they came to a steep street.

At length, when the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince was reached, Caillotte, fearing they could not hold out much longer, began to shout : " Stop, thief ! Stop, assassin ! "

The streets however were completely deserted ; they were indeed approaching a more populous quarter, but Caillotte was completely out of breath, and even Buffet would not be able to hold out much longer. If the cab could turn the corner without being stopped, George might still be saved, for five or six streets met near the Odéon, and if they could keep well in advance, there might be a chance of the man behind losing the scent. " Touch up your horse, my lad," said Cadoudal, " and when we reach the square, turn to the left down the Rue de Condé, and then to the right up the Rue du Petit-Bourbon." The leader of the Chouans never lost his presence of mind in the hour of danger, and since he had been wandering about Paris, had learned its turnings and windings sufficiently to practise the ruses which had so often served him in Brittany. His plan was to dart down the narrow streets which at that time clustered round St. Sulpice, and then to get into the quiet districts round the Luxembourg and the Observatory.

The main point was to avoid frequented streets where they might be stopped ; they would not have taken their present course had they known at once that they were followed. It was too late to change now, and the young Chouan whipped up his horse at the turn, and dashed into the square. The neighbourhood of the Odéon was much frequented by students in those days, and two cafés, brilliantly lighted with oil-lamps, flooded the little square with light, much to Cadoudal's annoyance. It was a sudden change from the deserted street through which they had been passing into this noise and animation, and Léridan, dazzled possibly by the lights from the café at the corner, ran into a little hand-cart laden with apples : he soon got his wheel clear and passed on, but the apple-woman began to vituperate the awkward driver, and her invectives attracted attention to the vehicle. Léridan, distracted by the noise, paid no heed to a long dray just issuing from the Rue de l'Odéon and blocking the passage. This forced him to wait till the street was clear ; a small crowd had already been gathered by the apple woman's objurgations, and it became further excited by the shouts of the police agents behind. " Murder ! Stop the cab ! " shouted the two men together.

On such occasions, people are always ready to step forward, and the cab was instantly surrounded, while the dray still blocked the way. " Lay your whip about you and turn to the left," said George, the instant he saw it clear.

Léridan dispersed the crowd in the manner suggested, while Cadoudal drew out his pistols and loaded them. He still hoped to escape, but it was necessary to be ready for anything. The horse was just turning when Caillotte and Buffet arrived on the scene, panting and exhausted, but able to seize the horse's head, one on either side. Léridan still used his whip, but they stood the lash rather than lose their prize. Then George said to the young Chouan : " Pray to St. Anne of Auray, and make your escape as you best can, while I attend to these rascals. Farewell," added he, " I believe this is the finish."

He fired his pistol, and Buffet fell dead on the spot, with a bullet through his forehead. Caillotte stooped when he saw his turn coming, but he was not quite in time to avoid the second shot, which broke his shoulderblade, and threw him bleeding and unconscious on his comrade's corpse. The

spectators of this terrible scene shrieked with terror and fled in all directions. The two Chouans profited by the alarm to jump out of the cab. Lérédan darted down the Rue de l'Odéon, while George fled in the opposite direction. The people soon recovered from their fright, and knowing that there were no more pistol shots to come (revolvers not having been then invented) they began to pursue the fugitive. George was still running with his poniard in his hand, and no one tried to bar the way, but the angry clamour of the crowd behind swelled, and finally attracted the notice of passengers in the Rue de Seine, who crowded to the entrance of the narrow street from which he would have to emerge.

Cadoudal fell into the midst of a curious rather than hostile group, but he had no time to discriminate between loungers and enemies, and used his poniard at hazard. At the first few thrusts, the crowd parted to make way for him; unluckily, a street urchin seized him by the legs and made him stumble. This was enough to make the group close round him again so closely that he could not use his arms. At the same moment, his pursuers from the Odéon arrived on the scene, and in another second or two, he found himself seized by the neck, body, legs, and thighs, and, in spite of his wonderful strength, he was unable to move. Ten men at least had hold of him. Then the Chouan general recognised that all was over, and cried, "I surrender."

The conspiracy and the hopes of the royalists had alike come to an end. The king whom Cadoudal and his bold comrades were unable to restore to his throne in 1804, ascended it without an effort in 1814. But, between those periods, thousands of French corpses had strewn the soil of Europe, from Cadiz to Moscow, and France had lost her natural frontiers. Who can say what would have been the result had not Caillotte frustrated the Chouan's attempt on the Rueil Road? Men may agitate, but Providence holds the reins.

Cadoudal, as soon as he ceased to defend himself, was bound with ropes lent by a cooper in the neighbourhood, and dragged to the nearest post-office, which was in the Rue Dauphine. He allowed himself to be conveyed thither without uttering a word. As they crossed the Place de l'Odéon, they met stretchers conveying the dead Bullet and the wounded Caillotte, who unclosed his eyes and began to shout as loud as he could: "Do not let him go! It is George Cadoudal."

At the post-office he was met by a police-officer, whom public rumour had brought thither. George was searched. A perfect arsenal of poniards and pistols was found on him, a scapulary, and a belt containing about sixty thousand francs in gold and notes. He was ready to own to his name and confess his designs, but when asked to name his accomplice, answered coldly: "I know no one in Paris." He was transferred at once to the Conciergerie. Lérédan had been arrested at the end of the Rue de l'Odéon. Of all the Chouans who had served under George Cadoudal since he landed at Biville, only Pierre Mancheu and Liardot were still at large.

XV.

DURING the five months Pierre Mancheu had passed at Chaillot in Cadoudal's hiding-place, he had contrived, in spite of his seclusion, to make a useful acquaintance. He went to market every day to buy provisions, and there he met with an honest market-gardener from Clamart, who sold him vegetables at half their usual price. The man's heart was won by his clever

talk about gardening matters, and the excellent hints he gave him about cultivating his crops. Pierre passed himself off as a small farmer from Anjou, who had been ruined by the Chouans, and the market-gardener, who detested the former government and its champions, sympathised strongly with the man who had suffered so much from the royalists and was such an authority on manures, and offered to help him in any way he could.

Manehou was clever enough to explain his presence in Paris by a plausible pretext: he said he had come in the hopes of obtaining an indemnity from government, and that unless he could do so, his means would soon be exhausted. Having thus paved his way, Manehou had no difficulty in providing for his own safety as soon as he had to quit the house on the Quai de Chaillot. He went at once to the banks of the Seine, and there concealed himself till between two and three o'clock in the morning, an hour at which he knew his friend from Clamart always arrived at the market. The closing of the barriers could not apply to provision-carts, and they were allowed to pass, on condition they consented to be examined both in coming in and going out. Manehou repaired to the market with Jacobin, found his friend, and told him a story about his petition having been rejected, so that he was left positively destitute, and he easily persuaded the man to smuggle him out of the city in his cart. He hid himself in a potato sack, while Jacobin, who required no passport, perched himself on the scat, and was wise enough to keep quiet throughout the journey. When they reached Clamart, Manehou felt himself safe. He might easily have disguised himself and passed on into Normandy or Brittany, but instead of doing so, he asked his benefactor to let him remain as his assistant without wages, merely stipulating for his keep, and the gardener thought himself only too lucky to obtain his help on such terms.

Pierre Manehou had an object in thus volunteering his services. Ever since Louise's dog had returned to him, he had made up his mind to find his wife, for he felt persuaded that she was in Paris, and not in prison, or her dog would not have been at liberty. He had noticed that Louise's name was never mentioned in his presence; St. Victor had nearly betrayed himself on the night when chance brought him to the *Chant du Coq*, and Manehou had guessed from the few words he let fall that he was acquainted with Louise's hiding-place. Yet Pierre never ventured to question either St. Victor or Cadoudal, and he could learn nothing from Malabry. He would however probably have quitted Paris long ago, had he not still clung to the hope of finding his wife, though he hardly ever went out except by night, during the five months which succeeded the failure at Rueil, and kept Jacobin fastened up, intending to use him as a bloodhound when circumstances became more propitious.

While in his seclusion at Clamart, he learned the arrest of St. Victor and Malabry, and afterwards that of Cadoudal, and then he breathed freely. Within two days, the barriers were re-opened, and the obscure Chouan might hope that his existence would be forgotten. He had enough money in his belt to buy a farm in his own country, where he hoped to regain the fortune he had lost at Bois Guillaume. Still, he wanted his wife to take with him—not because he still loved her, for he had ceased to love anything but his money—but because she was useful, and his property. He felt that he had been robbed of her, as he had of his farm, and since he could not revenge himself on the gendarmes who had burnt his house and stores, he meant to avenge himself at least on the Chouan who had taken away his wife. He was convinced that she was with some Chouan, and by degrees

he made sure that this could be none other than Fleur-de-Rose, or Liardot, as they called him. Maneheu had never been let into the complete secret of the double character assumed by Liardot, but he could observe that Cadoudal and his friends avoided mentioning this man in his presence, and never told him where he lived, though they were in constant communication with him.

This mystery was enough to reveal all, and Maneheu had determined to kill Liardot, as soon as he could do so with impunity. Cadoudal had been captured on the 9th March; Maneheu was prudent enough to wait for two months at Clamart, before he ventured to drive his friend's vegetable cart once or twice a week into Paris, accompanied by Jacobin.

No more arrests were announced, and all the newspapers spoke of the trial of the Chouans as near at hand. The names of the prisoners were published, forty-seven in number, and on this list, where General Moreau figured side by side with Cadoudal, Maneheu vainly sought for his wife's name, or that of Fleur-de-Rose. Throughout three weeks, whenever he visited Paris, he took a long walk through the town with Jacobin at his heels. He was careful to do this before daybreak, between the times of unloading his cart and returning to Clamart. But, whether owing to the instincts of the hound having become blunted by his long seclusion, or to his being taken in the wrong direction, he never fell on the scent. The 19th of May had arrived, and Pierre was no wiser than when he commenced his researches. He was fortunate however in having attracted no notice. Two months earlier, he would have been detected, even in his peasant's dress, but even the vigilance of the police is soon exhausted, and Fouché's agents believed they had captured most of George's accomplices. Besides, great events had taken place meanwhile. Within twelve days of Cadoudal's arrest, on the 21st of March, the Duc d'Enghien, the last representative of the house of Condé, who had been removed by force from the duchy of Baden, in defiance of the law of nations, was basely shot by night in the moat of the Château de Vincennes. On the 6th of April, Pichegru, who had been imprisoned in the Temple, was found strangled in his bed. On the 18th of May, Napoleon Bonaparte had been proclaimed Emperor of the French.

No one thought any more of the obscure Chouans still at large in the capital of the new empire, or, at least, only one person—not Fouché—who was deep in intrigues to be again nominated minister and created a duke, but Caillotte. The spy had not died from the effects of George's pistol-shot, but he had not recovered it yet. The bullet had broken his left shoulder-blade, and after two months of agony and a painful operation, he was barely convalescent. If he had not been confined to his bed ever since the 9th of March, Pierre Maneheu would never have been permitted to roam the streets with his dog. Caillotte, however, was forced to content himself with sending written warnings to his employer to mistrust Jacques Sourdat, and to keep an eye on his prisoner. Fouché, absorbed by other cares, had paid but little heed: still, he had the house watched, and, on the day when the Empire was proclaimed, he sent for Sourdat, and told him that unless he could get the woman to disclose anything before the 28th of May, when the trial began, she would be summoned before the criminal court with George and his accomplices in order to shift the responsibility from Fouché himself.

Liardot received the announcement with perfect composure, but he returned home in despair. Ever since his friends had been arrested, life had become

a burden to him ; all his hopes had vanished, and he only remained in France under a vague idea that he might be of some use to his former comrades. Louise Maneheu persevered in resisting all his counsels and entreaties, and though she kept the promise she had made, never to speak of her insane passion for Liardot, her eyes betrayed her ten times in a day, and Liardot dreaded to read in them the approach of some fresh crisis. It was true that he could never love this woman, yet the remembrance of his own hopeless love in former days made him compassionate the sufferings of this proud descendant of the house of Baromesnil.

His chief's ultimatum forced him at length to action. He was detained all that 18th of May, even far into the night, by his work at the office, where he had to classify the reports brought in every minute upon the impression produced by the proclamation of the Empire, and it was not till daybreak next morning that he had an opportunity of speaking to Louise. She was always up early, and Liardot found her in the first room of his little suite. The two windows of this ante-room looked into the court-yard, and opened upon a narrow balcony where she grew some flowers in boxes. She was watering these when Liardot entered, and she looked in better spirits than usual. Her beauty had never been more striking, and her large blue eyes sparkled as they had done on the evening she first saw Liardot in the low room at Bois-Guillaume.

"Louise," said he abruptly, "you must go." She looked at him, but did not make the gesture by which she usually received his proposition.

"Fouehé announced to me yesterday that he is going to order you back to prison, unless, within three days, you make any valuable disclosures. Our friends' trial commences on the 28th of this month ; you are sure to be tried and condemned with them, so you see you must go."

"And I have something to tell you," said Louise.

"Why do you not answer me?" insisted Liardot, impatiently.

"I am going to do," replied she, gently, "but I want to tell you first that I have seen Pierre Maneheu !"

"Seen your husband !" exclaimed Liardot. "When ? Where ?"

"Yesterday, in front of the entrance to St. Eustache. I was coming out of the church, when he passed, driving a country cart."

"Did he see you ?"

"No," said Louise, casting down her eyes. Liardot guessed that she found it hard to explain why she had let Pierre Maneheu pass without calling to him, or, perhaps, even avoided his eye, so he did not dwell on this delicate point.

"I know now that he must have been in Paris all the time," said Louise.

"And I am sure also," she added, lowering her voice, "that he has found a place of refuge where he will not be disturbed."

"What makes you so sure of that ?"

"The cart, and then his dress, it was that of a peasant ; he must have found employment with some gardener in the suburbs."

"That is quite possible. I can even tell you that his name has never figured in the proscription lists, which deal only with the Chouans who lauded from England before or after George. He may therefore have a chance of escaping for the present, though I cannot understand why he stays here, instead of making for the frontier."

"It must be because he is searching for me. And I do not wish him to find me," said Louise.

"Was his dog with him ?" asked Liardot, after a brief silence.

"No. Not unless he was lying under the sacks of vegetables, in which case, he might not scent me."

"But if he followed his master on foot, would he not be sure to bring him here?"

"Yes, and I am surprised that Jacobin has never returned. He cannot be with Pierre. But I do not mean to be found here," returned Louise.

"Then you will consent to go?"

"Yes, because I am no longer afraid of Pierre's being arrested. If he had been brought for trial with the rest, I should have given myself up, and gone to take a seat by his side on the prisoners' bench. But now that he is free, my presence in Paris can only do him harm. I will go at once, if you are still able to get me out of the country. You must put in the newspapers that the female Chonan arrested last year on the cliff at Biville has succeeded in getting out of France; he is sure to see the paragraph, and will cease to hunt for me in Paris. By and bye—before long, indeed—he will forget me."

"Well, then," said Liardot, overjoyed at her tardy consent to go, "you are ready to make use at once of the means I can provide for assisting you to gain the coast and cross to England?"

"I am."

"You know, I suppose, that I am remaining here?" asked Liardot anxiously, for he feared lest she might still retain illusions on the point of their separation.

"I had hoped we might have gone together," said she. "The king's cause is ruined now. Why should you stay?"

"Please God, it will not be for long. But while there is the slightest chance of saving one of our friends, I must not leave Paris. I can still receive tidings of them in their prison, I can bribe their jailers, and if everything else fails, I can implore pardon for some of our ill-fated comrades, even I have to solicit it through General Beauharnais' widow, whom the soldiers of the republic have just proclaimed Empress."

"I know of one who will aid you in your noble efforts. The sister of that gendarme officer whom our friend rescued loves him, and she promised me two months ago, that if he were arrested, she would sue for his life—and that of another."

"Another?"

"Yes, and when she gave me the promise, I thought, may I not own it, of saving you; but, thank God, your life is not in danger, and by reminding her of her promise, you may induce her to petition for two of our comrades."

"Thank you, Louise, I know your generous heart," said Liardot, with much emotion. "I do not know what this young girl may do, but at present I cannot desert my party."

"And when their fate is decided?" asked Louise, tremulously.

"Then," exclaimed Liardot, "I shall cast off the ignoble livery I have stooped to wear in order to serve our party, and I shall turn my back on the cursed city where revolution has crowned an upstart soldier, and make for a land of freedom."

"For England, I presume?"

"Yes, for England, where I hope I may soon end my days."

"I too pray God every day that He may be pleased soon to call me from this world," said Louise; "but before then, I trust He will permit me to see you once more in a foreign land."

"Yes, Louise, I hope we may meet again," said Liardot, touched by her resignation, "but, as I have told you, you must go now."

"Tell me what to do."

"Listen. I have reason to believe this house is watched, but the spies are accustomed to see you go about marketing. In an hour from hence, you must go out as usual and proceed to make purchases in various shops, so that, if you are followed, no suspicion may be aroused. At the end of your round, go to the grocer's at the end of the Rue Montmartre. His shop is always crowded, and there are two exits; you can easily disappear in the crowd and pass out through the small door opening into the Rue Montorgueil. Look round, and if, as I hope, you find no suspicious person behind you, go on instantly to the boulevard and the St. Denis barrier. A public coach starts from there for Montmorency at nine o'clock, and you are sure to find a seat. On arriving at Montmorency, ask your way to the village of Groslay and walk on there. When you enter the village you will see an inn on your right bearing the sign of the *Croissant*; it is kept by a friend of ours called Védie. Give him this letter, and he will find you a place of concealment for the rest of the day, and conduct you to a friend at the other end of the forest by night."

So saying, Liardot gave Louise a letter. "You will be handed on in this manner," added he, "till you reach Croixdalle, where Tanguy, the sabot-maker, whom you saw at Bois-Guillaume, will receive you and keep you till he can arrange with some fisherman from Tréport to take you across the channel. You will be received in London by one of the former comrades of my Breton campaigns, whose address Tanguy will give you as soon as you are in the boat, with a card to identify you. It is needful to take every precaution, and in case of any accident in the crossing, you must have no papers on your person addressed to an *émigré*. This is all I have to say, Louise. Is there anything you want to ask?"

"Only one thing. Promise that I shall see you again."

"I promise you that if I am still alive two months hence, you shall see me. Now, take this purse which contains two hundred louis, to provide for the expenses of your journey and starting life in London, and—let us say good-bye."

Liardot's voice had softened as he pronounced the final words, and Louise rose to her feet, pale and trembling. The hour for sacrificing herself had arrived, and she wondered whether the inflexible Chouan would reward her for her resignation by a parting embrace.

"Listen!" said she, suddenly. Liardot did so, and heard a singular sound, as if some one were scratching at the outer door. It began at the bottom, then it spread, as if some one were scraping and patting all the way down. "I could swear it was Jacobin," said Louise, in a whisper. "I will open the door and let him in."

She was turning towards the door, when Liardot caught her by the arm, and said under his breath: "Beware!"

"Why?"

"Because the dog is evidently not alone; and who can tell whether your husband—"

"If Picre were there, he would have rung or knocked."

This seemed justly argued. It was true that Maneheu or any other man accompanying Jacobin would have announced himself. The dog might have been wandering about the streets and have chanced at last on his old home. The only fear was lest he should have been followed by some spy;

still, they must run the risk of this, and not leave the animal on the staircase, where he would be sure to bark and attract the attention of their neighbours.

"I shall have to open the door, I think," said Liardot; "still, as we cannot tell who is there, you had better not show yourself, but go out into the balcony. If there is no objection to your appearing, I will call you, and you can hear all that goes on from your hiding-place."

"I can even see through the trellis," murmured Louise. She hesitated for a moment, but, feeling the step to be prudent, soon passed into the hanging garden she had created. Her sweet peas and other climbing plants had already formed a green curtain, which screened her completely from view.

The scratching became louder and more impatient. The old Chouan went softly to the door, and opened it an inch. Jacobin instantly thrust his nose through, followed by his body, and greeted the master of the house with joyous barks. Liardot felt reassured, and threw the door wide open. Unluckily he had not noticed a cord attached to the dog's collar; the other end of this cord was in a man's hand, and the man promptly followed the animal. Liardot drew back and frowned. Pierre Mancheu stood before him, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a carter's smock-frock, and holding in his left hand the leash, at which the dog pulled in his vain efforts to dart towards the balcony where he could scent his mistress.

The farmer of Bois-Guillaume began by kicking the door to, and then advanced a step. Liardot, having recovered his first impulse of surprise, barred his passage, and said calmly: "I thought you had left Paris."

"You see I have not," retorted Mancheu, roughly.

"So I see, and I am glad to find the police have not yet found you, but I cannot tell what has brought you here."

"Really?"

"No, nor how you have found your way to my house."

"Jacin found it. I was looking for you."

"Indeed! And why?"

"You must have some notion."

"No, indeed, unless you want me to help you to get away from Paris."

"I do not need your help. If I had chosen, I should have been in England long ago."

"You are fortunate in finding it so easy to escape. I could not say as much myself. But that does not tell me what you want here."

"I have come to look for my wife," said Mancheu in a quivering voice.

Liardot was prepared for this answer, and did not move a muscle. "Your wife!" repeated he haughtily, "you have not entrusted her to my keeping, so far as I know."

"No, you have taken charge of her without my permission."

"What do you mean by your foolish jest?"

"I am not jesting. Louise was arrested by the *blues* on Penly Point, on the 21st of August last year, but she must have been rescued or set at liberty, since her name is not in the list of prisoners about to be brought before the Criminal Court of the Seine."

"That does not prove she is here."

"Possibly not, but I am sure she is. I need only look at my dog to feel convinced of it." Jacobin's attitude was indeed unmistakable. He kept straining at the leash, and as he could not break it, he stood on his hind

legs and began to direct to the balcony a number of joyous, plaintive barks, which resembled an appeal.

Liardot could only shrug his shoulders. "She is here, I say," resumed Maneheu, "and I want her."

"You are out of your mind," replied the other coldly.

"I am not indeed, and I tell you again that I want my wife."

"Then go and look for her elsewhere."

"No, I shall not go till you give her up to me."

Liardot made a violent effort to restrain his anger. "Wretched man," said he, and the words whistled between his teeth. "What would you do with the noble woman who saved us all on Biville cliff? You are outlawed, your description is in the hands of Fouché's agents, and you are sure to be taken. Do you wish to make your wife share your miserable fate? If I had found the means of procuring her a safe retreat, can you suppose I should give her up to incur all the risks of the life you are forced to lead?"

"Ah! Then you do not deny it now," said Maneheu, with a sneer.

"Let us put an end to this," said the exasperated Liardot. "For the last time of asking, what do you want?"

"You know as well as I do, but I will be patient and answer. I want to examine your rooms with Jacobin as my searcher, and hunt into every nook and corner. If I cannot find my wife, I promise to retire at once. Do you consent to this arrangement?"

"On the contrary, I decline most absolutely, and must request you will withdraw."

"Beware! You brave me, and no one has ever yet done so with impunity."

"I care little for your threats, and order you to leave my house."

"And I summon you to give me leave to pass."

The Chouan's eyes were obstinately fastened on Liardot's contorted face, and he never saw Louise, who was just peeping from her hiding-place. The poor woman had not lost a word of the dialogue, and, in her terror and dismay, she was about to give herself up to avoid a catastrophe.

"For the last time, Fleur-de-Rose, will you let me pass?" asked Maneheu.

"Be off with you!" was Liardot's only reply.

"You will not. Then die!" and drawing from the folds of his smock-frock a pistol he had held concealed in his right hand, Maneheu fired. Bullets soon reach their destination, and there was not more than four yards between the muzzle of the pistol and Liardot's breast. There was room enough for Louise to dart between. The bullet pierced the heart which had already suffered so cruelly, and the last of the Le Graverends fell dead at the feet of the man she loved, killed by the man who had once loved her. Her dearest wish had been to save Liardot's life, and the wish was granted.

"Villain!" cried the supposed Sourdat, as he darted on the murderer, who was attempting to grasp his second pistol. He seized him by the throat, but the Chouan was robust and managed to get free. A horrible contest ensued within two paces of the corpse, which Jacobin, having just succeeded in breaking his leash, was covering with caresses. Maneheu soon bit his adversary so severely that he forced him to relax his hold, and taking advantage of the momentary respite, opened the door and darted down the staircase. Liardot mastered his sufferings, and was rushing after

him, when he heard steps and voices on the lower floor. "Stop him ! Stop the assassin !" cried he, at the top of his voice.

"Halt, men, and let no one pass," returned some one below.

Maneu, understanding that escape in that direction was impossible, ran back, clearing four steps at a stride. Liardot tried to seize him as he passed, but received a dagger-thrust through his arm, and Maneu, clearing the landing at a bound, continued his way upstairs.

"Come up ! He is going to escape by the roof !" cried Liardot. Five or six men promptly appeared with Caillotte at their head ; he looked very pale after his long illness, and his arm was still in a sling. Liardot instantly grasped that he had come by Fouché's orders to fetch Louise.

"Well, Sourdat, what is the matter ?" asked the spy. "We have just heard something like a pistol shot, and here I find you covered with blood, and your arm wounded ; is there some disturbance in your house ?"

"Come on, follow me ! The assassin will escape if we lose any time."

"The assassin ! What assassin ?"

"He is making his escape, I tell you ; this staircase leads to an attic which opens on the roof, and so he can pass to the next house." Liardot, despairing of convincing the men in time of the necessity of pursuing the fugitive, was about to dart after him himself, but Caillotte caught hold of his coat and said coolly :

"One thing at a time, my dear Sourdat. I cannot guess the reason of your excitement, but I must tell you that our employer has sent me here on a special mission which I am bound to discharge first of all, and then we can go in pursuit of this assassin of yours."

Caillotte, who was of an incredulous nature, suspected his fellow spy of having invented an imaginary crime, and trying to send him and his men on a fruitless quest in order to give the Chouan woman time to escape.

"Very well. You will be responsible for this man's escape," said Liardot with subdued rage. "What brings you here ?"

"I feel some embarrassment in telling you," said Caillotte, "but you are aware, my dear Sourdat, that I must do my duty. Our employer is tired of waiting for revelations from this pretty creature, and has given me orders to take her to the prison of La Force, where he hopes change of air may cure this paralysis of her tongue."

"Do you want the Chouan prisoner ?" thundered Liardot. "Then take her !" And kicking open the door, he pointed to Louise, stretched on the floor in a pool of blood. Jacobin lay by the corpse, howling piteously. The bullet had gone straight to her heart, and the handsome woman had expired without a cry or farewell look.

The spectacle was so melancholy and so unexpected that even Caillotte shrank back a few steps and said in a subdued tone : "Whew ! that alters the matter indeed. The woman seems to be really dead, and the master will not get his revelations after all."

Liardot stood with folded arms and bowed head, gazing on the corpse, while big tears coursed down his bronzed cheeks.

"Who did this deed ?" suddenly asked Caillotte, who began to think whether his comrade might not have taken the woman's life in order to get rid of her and prevent her letting anything out.

"The man who killed her is the one you choose to allow at this moment to be making his escape," said Liardot in reply.

"But where does this man come from, and what is his name ?"

"He is a Chouan, and once kept the *Chant du Coq inn*."

"What? The man with the dog? The woman's husband! Ah, here is the very dog I have been in search of! I begin to understand it now. And you say he has escaped up those stairs?"

"He must be far off enough by this time, and he owes his escape to you," said Liardot, bitterly.

"Off with you, my lads," cried the spy to his assistants, "give the fellow chase! Let four of you go after him, while two run down into the street to watch the house-doors."

The order was speedily executed. "And now that we are alone," said he, "tell me all that happened, Sourdats. It must have given you an awful fright. But could you not have defended her?"

Liardot raised his head, and the spy was so alarmed by the expression he read on his face that he instinctively retreated towards the door. He had cause to be alarmed, for Liardot felt ready to wring the neck of the wretch who dared to intrude on his grief and cross-examine him in the presence of this corpse. He remembered in time that his task was not yet done, and made an effort to control his anger. "The Chouan must have employed the dog to track his wife, and the animal brought him here," said he, coldly. "I suspected nothing and opened the door, and there he saw her. He seized his pistol to blow out my brains, when she darted between us and received the shot. I tried to arrest him, but he was too strong for me, and was just escaping when you arrived. Then, as he darted up the staircase, he stabbed me through the arm."

This short story had been delivered in a manner calculated to impress Fouché's agent, and its end was attained.

"'Pon my word, Sourdats," exclaimed Caillotte, "I had misjudged you, and am ready to apologize. I am willing to own I had suspected you of a little complicity with this rebel, and even tried to make our employer share my suspicions, but he did not, and now I will set it all right. Never fear I shall ever again doubt a man who has received both a pistol-shot and a dagger-thrust from a Chouan! George only treated me to a bullet, though he certainly thought he had killed me, and—"

This monologue was stopped by the return of one of the men from the roof, bringing Pierre Maneheu's smock-frock, and he said as he laid it down: "I believe the rascal has managed to get off. We found this left on the dormer-window by which he got down the staircase of the adjoining house. He must have lost no time, for our men in the street have seen nothing of him."

"You are a set of asses. I will go myself," cried Caillotte.

Liardot at length found himself alone, and kneeling down, he imprinted one kiss on the icy forehead of the dead woman, and prayed for Louise Le Graverend, who had loved him.

XVI.

THE efforts of Caillotte and his men proved fruitless; Pierre Maneheu was nowhere to be found. His victim, the last of the Baronesnils, had at least decent burial in a grave not far from that which contained the joint remains of Christiane de Limueil and Aymeric de Candeuilh.

Liardot was the only person who followed the coffin to the poor cemetery at Grenelle where for the last seven years had lain the mortal part of the woman whose image was still fresh in his memory. Louise had her share

of the flowers which the former leader of the *Collets Noirs* placed every day on the modest green mound surmounted by the stone cross which pious hands had raised in the year '75.

Of all those whom fate had entangled in the terrible drama of 1804, Louise Maneheu was possibly the most fortunate. She had not given her life for an idea; she had sacrificed it to save a man. She knew that she had nothing to look forward to except death, and when it came, she hailed it as a deliverer. Gabrielle Robert, who still lived to suffer, might have envied her lot, while Liardot, who found himself left alone with the bitter memories of the past, only consented to live in the hope of assisting his friends in prison. He had still a hope of saving some of them, for since Caillotte had reported the circumstances of the Chouan woman's death, Jacques Sourdat stood higher than ever in Fouché's confidence. Liardot still resigned himself to submit for a while to the patronage of the despicable spy and his master, through which he had already procured free access to the prison of his former comrades, and the power of procuring them some trifling indulgences.

Liardot was daily studying the topography of the place and the character of the jailers, in order to facilitate some plan of escape. He had time enough to arrange it, for the trial was not to begin till the 28th of May; this would occupy many days, and a certain number were likely also to intervene between the passing of sentence and its execution. Liardot intended to employ this last respite, if necessary, in appealing to Gabrielle Robert and her brother, and asking their intercession for those condemned to the scaffold. Meanwhile he awaited the sad day, living all alone with Jacobin, who seemed to have adopted him as his master ever since Louise's death, as though he had understood that Pierre Maneheu was now only a murderer whom he would not follow.

The supposed Jacques Sourdat had not courage to visit his friends in prison, but he forced himself to be present in court during the thirteen long days during which their trial continued. Forty-two prisoners took their seat on the benches usually assigned to thieves and forgers, and among these were Moreau, the victor of Hohenlinden, some scions of the noblest families of France, and George Cadoudal, the hero of the Chouan rising. It would be difficult to convey an idea of the spectacle presented by the court-house. In the first rank of prisoners sat Morcau, between his former aide-de-camp General Lajolais, and the Abbé David, who had acted as his go-between with Pichegru. Behind him came the Duc de Polignac's two sons, the Marquis de Rivière and Charles d'Hozier, smiling haughtily, like noblemen prepared to perish gracefully. Then came George, surrounded, as on a field-day, by his Chouans, and towering above them all.

The Bretons had no eyes for the judges or audience, they gazed only at their chief, and listened to him with as great respect as if they had been receiving his last commands before charging the *blues*. St. Victor was conspicuous, with Malabry and Tamerlane by his side. He had lost none of his beauty or grace, and had recovered his usual lighthearted manner, while Malabry remained sullen and indifferent, and Tamerlane poetical and full of banter.

Public opinion was not altogether adverse to the accused. The Parisian *bourgeoisie*, indeed, expressed with great enthusiasm their wish that Moreau might be pronounced innocent, and restored to his rank in the army. George and his companions attracted interest by their courage and the heroic attitude in which they faced death. When the Chouan leader rose

to reply to the President's questions, a violent scene was expected, and every one was greatly surprised to find George expressing himself in a calm tone of haughty politeness, and in the most refined language.

He began by formally denying his relations with Moreau and Pichegru, and even when he found himself overwhelmed by the weight of evidence against them, did not appear either disconcerted or convinced; he merely held his peace. He was chivalrous enough to wish to exculpate the republican generals who had believed for a moment in the possibility of the monarchy being restored in France. And yet Pichegru was dead, and Cadoudal had felt neither affection nor esteem for Moreau. He openly avowed, however, his own object in coming to France to organise an attack on the First Consul, and his followers imitated his bold and firm bearing.

Next to Cadoudal, St. Victor most surprised the judges and audience by the lively audacity of his replies, no less than by his incomparable grace. He captivated all the women, who saw in him only the gay and brilliant conspirator and reckless soldier of fortune. And yet, had they been able to read his heart, they would have found Gabrielle Robert's image deeply graven there.

Jean-Baptiste Coster de St. Victor was ready to die with heroic indifference, his one fear was lest the public should be admitted into the secret of his chaste interviews with Gabrielle, but he was soon reassured. Fouché had no interest in bruiting abroad either this story or the tragic fate of Louise Maneheu. Bonaparte had strictly prohibited the name of the sister of one of his most devoted followers being implicated in the trial, and the judges were prepared to obey the Emperor.

The trial lasted till the 8th of June, when, at the close of the proceedings, the President asked each of the prisoners if he had anything to allege in his defence, George again denied in a few haughty words any connection with the affair of the Infernal Machine. St. Victor contented himself with smiling and bowing to the judges, as he might have done to his antagonist before crossing swords.

Malabry answered gruffly: "Nothing that I could say would prevent you from cutting my throat, so leave me in peace."

He did not even take the trouble to rise. Tamerlane, on the other hand, was on his feet in a second, and began to recite the famous tirade in *Cinna*, where Augustus dwells on the drawbacks of government by the people. The President, at first surprised and then irritated, told him to be silent, and ordered a gendarme to make him sit down. The Chouan poet yielded to compulsion, but not without firing a parting shot in a quotation from Corneille.

In contrast to this comic incident, a touching scene followed. Armand, the elder of the two Polignacs, prayed the magistrates to be satisfied with his death, and to take pity on his brother's youth.

The brother instantly rose to his feet and cried: "No, if one of us has to atone by his life for the crime of having conspired, let mine be forfeited and save Armand. He has a wife and family, while I am alone in the world and shall bring no punishment on any innocent beings."

"Do not listen to him," cried the elder brother. "I am the most guilty and ought to die."

The audience shed tears, and even the judges seemed touched. Hénar, the President, hastened to close the proceedings, and the tribunal retired to consider their verdict. A stormy deliberation ensued, lasting nearly

thirty-six hours. The fate of George and his companions had never been doubted, but some of the judges were interested in Moreau, and saw no sufficient proof of his complicity with the Chouans. Government had presumed to intimate to the tribunal that it expected Morcau to be sentenced to death, and some of the judges yielded to political considerations, while others refused to act against their conscience by condemning him. Thuriot, the regicide, voted for his death, and pleaded that the Emperor was certain to pardon Moreau, which drew from Clavier, a magistrate whose name deserves commemoration, the fine reply: "And who will pardon us, if we vote against our convictions?"

Seven out of the twelve judges wished to acquit Moreau. The influence of Thuriot and the President Hénar ended in a sort of compromise by which the general was declared guilty, but not condemned to death. At length, at 4 A.M. on Sunday, the 10th of June, 1804, the tribunal re-entered the court to pronounce sentence on George Cadoudal and his accomplices.

The public, wearied by the long delay, had deserted the court, and few were present beside the gendarmes and officials. Liardot, however, was there in his corner, where he had sat, gloomily waiting, for two nights, to hear sentence passed on his former comrades in arms.

Moreau and his friends seemed reserved and dejected, while George's party, strong in their convictions and prepared to die for the cause they had always defended, were chatting as freely as soldiers bivouacking on the eve of battle. As the magistrates re-entered, and the sentinels presented arms, a brilliant gleam of June sunshine fell on Liardot's face as he stood with folded arms, throwing his head back. St. Victor, who was looking around with indifference, caught sight of him, and made an almost imperceptible signal.

The President, in an exhausted voice, then pronounced the capital sentence and confiscation of property against twenty of the conspirators, Cadoudal's name heading the list, which included the elder Polignac, St. Victor, Tamerlane, and Malabry. Five others, among whom were Moreau, Léridan, and the younger Polignac, were sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The remaining two-and-twenty prisoners, some of whom were women, were acquitted, but those who had received or housed conspirators were passed on to another section, to be sentenced according to the decrees recently promulgated.

Jules de Polignac was the only one of the condemned men who wept, and this was over the fate of Armand, who, for his part, rejoiced in having saved his younger brother. Moreau, who was deadly pale, turned his back on the magistrates and shrugged his shoulders. George surveyed his Chouans, as a general might his soldiers when a bomb bursts in their ranks, and he smiled proudly on seeing no trace of weakness on any of their manly faces.

The President ordered the prisoners to be removed, and the gendarmes clustered around to conduct them back to the Conciergerie. The court was rapidly clearing, but Liardot never moved. George exchanged a parting glance with him, as he passed. St. Victor followed immediately behind his general, and contrived, without being seen, to slip into the old Chouan's hand a ring which he had just taken from his finger, and whisper: "For her!"

XVII.

THE curtain was about to fall on the drama. The struggle which had continued for more than ten years between the partisans of the old French monarchy and the Revolution which culminated in a military despotism was at an end. During the whole period, Royalist fusillades and attacks had replied to the guillotine of the Revolutionist party, and people had ceased to be surprised or shocked at any atrocity. George Cadoudal, a brave, highly educated man, born to command, and incapable of a mean action, had thought what we should now regard as a highway exploit the fair attack of a loyal enemy, since he offered the First Consul a fight between equal numbers.

We know that he and his followers were mistaken, since noble ends and sincere convictions can never justify a murder, and assassins, even if they kill tyrants like Brutus, are always to be execrated. Events had once more proved that the result of attempting to get rid of a man by criminal means is to contribute to his elevation. The nation thought of crowning the glorious leader of the Republican armies by way of answer to the enemies of the Revolution. These facts, which are now matters of history, were patent to Liardot, and he believed the king's cause to be utterly lost. His unfortunate friends had been sent back to the Conciergerie, a prison from which there was no escape except by the scaffold, and no one was admitted to their cells. Yet he heard everything about them from the turnkeys, and was aware that on the very morning when they were sentenced, Réal, the state official who had not yet been openly supplanted by Fouché, had paid George a visit. In the course of a long conversation, he was said to have insinuated that the Emperor would pardon the Chouan leader if he threw himself on his mercy, but Cadoudal resisted these generous overtures, and appeared resolved to share the fate of his followers.

Liardot knew that his old comrade would prove inflexible, but he had a faint hope that St. Victor, Deville, and Burban, who had once shared his campaigns, and attempted, like himself, to set his poor Louise at liberty, might yet be saved if he could interest Major Robert in their fate. He knew the chivalrous nature of the republican officer, and that no finer occasion for a display of his generosity could be found than in the case of the trio against whom he had personal grounds of complaint. He founded especial hopes for St. Victor upon what he knew of the Major's character, but he remembered also that his first business must be to place the ring with which he had been entrusted in Mademoiselle Robert's hands.

On the day following that on which sentence had been passed, Liardot accordingly presented himself at the Tuileries, and asked to see Mademoiselle Robert, saying that he was the bearer of a letter which must be given only to the lady herself. He was told that the reader to Her Imperial Majesty was only just recovering from a long and dangerous illness, and could receive neither visitors nor letters. He then repaired to the barracks on the Quai d'Orsay, to learn that Major Robert had left for Italy, a month ago, and had not yet returned.

Liardot returned home in despair. *He* might wait for the Major's return or his sister's restoration to health, but the executioner would not. He was well aware that George had consented to appeal against the sentence, not with a desire to prolong his own life, but in order to give his companions more time to prepare for death, and possibly to allow the

noblemen sentenced with them to avail themselves of the Imperial clemency he disdained for himself ; Liardot knew, however, that Government was anxious to finish it all as soon as possible, and that the magistrates would promptly reject the application for another trial.

Twelve days passed by in inquiring after the prisoners, and applying daily for information as to the Major's movements and the progress made by Mademoiselle Robert. He (Liardot) learned also that M. de Polignac and M. de Rivière had, like Cadoudal, refused to implore Bonaparte's clemency, but that their relatives had touched the Emperor's heart and obtained their pardon. Others had followed suit. Only George and his Chouans were left to face the scaffold.

On the evening of the 22nd of June, Liardot learned through the Governor of the Conciergerie that the Court of Cassation would assemble next day to decide on the Chouans' appeal. Unless some step could be taken and a pardon granted immediately, there would be no chance for St. Victor and his two friends. By daybreak, Liardot, who had never closed his eyes, started off, as usual, for the Quai d'Orsay. Good news awaited him at the barracks. The Major had arrived just after midnight in a post-chaise, wearing a civilian's dress ; he had barely time to don his uniform before he started for the Tuileries, probably to report the results of his mission to the Emperor. The orderly who gave Liardot this information, added that the Major would be all day at the Palace. The old Chouan at once crossed the Pont-Royal and hastened to the Cour du Carrousel entrance ; the sentry, however, informed him that his orders were to admit no one before eight o'clock. He had a whole hour to wait, and finding the gates of the gardens open, stepped in there to ponder the matter at leisure, and sought a seat in the shade, for the sun was already powerful.

The gardens, which had been ravaged on the 10th of August, 1792, were beginning to recover their beauty ; the walks had been gravelled, the borders dug over, and flowers planted in the immediate vicinity of the palace. Even a few of the statues had been replaced on their pedestals. The trench which afterwards separated the Emperor's private grounds from the public gardens was not yet made, and there was free access to the façade of the palace.

The seat occupied by Liardot was only a few yards from the Flora pavilion, and he found it a quiet retreat. He had St. Victor's ring with him, and was just putting it on his finger to prevent his forgetting it, when he heard the gravel crackle, and looking up, saw a couple issuing from the Flora pavilion and coming towards him. A young lady dressed in black was advancing on the arm of an officer in uniform ; Liardot instantly recognised Major Robert, and concluded that the lady was his sister.

Gabrielle looked paler than ever in her black dress, but this pallor gave her beauty a more interesting character. Her step was very feeble, and it was evident that she was taking her first walk. Her brother seemed proud and happy to be by her side, and was talking to her with demonstrative affection, but she scarcely replied. Liardot thought Providence had sent them in his way, and he advanced to meet them, hat in hand. Gabrielle raised her eyes in astonishment, and the Major frowned.

"Good-day, Sourdat," said he, in anything but an encouraging tone ; "I hear that you have been at my quarters very often during my absence. I cannot imagine why you want to see me, but if you have anything to say, you must come to the Quai d'Orsay by-and-by. I am now walking with

my sister, who is just recovering from an illness, and I cannot attend to you."

"What I have to say will brook no delay," rejoined Liardot firmly, and he added in a lower tone: "I can speak before this lady."

"Well, then, out with it," said the officer impatiently. "What do you want?"

"Excuse me, Major, if I speak first to Mademoiselle Robert," replied Liardot with composure. And, turning to Gabrielle, he said with some emotion: "My house was honoured by your presence last August, Mademoiselle, one evening when you had just escaped a great danger."

"What!" exclaimed the young girl, "can you mean—"

"That night, an unfortunate friend of mine, who is very dear to me, saved you from a frightful death by rescuing you from the crowd."

"At Tivoli! Your friend, you say? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, and his only hope is in you."

"Then he is still alive! Where is he?" asked the distracted Gabrielle.

"At the Conciergerie, and in a few days, to-morrow possibly—unless he receives a pardon—"

"Condemned to death! He is condemned! They have deceived me."

"This is beyond everything," said François Robert, seizing Liardot by the collar; "explain this instant, Monsieur Sourdat, what you mean by this scene, and then I shall teach you how to play such tricks on me."

The officer was trembling with anger; he could not conceive what Sourdat, an agent of Fouché's, could have to do with the matter, but he understood that he must be alluding to St. Victor, whose sad fate he had contrived to conceal from Gabrielle. After Madame Desrosiers' fatal imprudence, through which Mademoiselle Robert had learned the young Chouan's arrest, the poor girl had been seized with a fever which brought her to death's door. The Major had never left her bedside till the day when he was despatched by the Emperor on a mission to Italy. At that moment Gabrielle was still very ill, but had recovered her senses after some attacks of delirium, and her brother managed to make her understand that St. Victor had died of injuries received near the house on the Quai de Chaillot. In inflicting this grief on his beloved sister, the Major hoped to spare her the pain of learning he was condemned to the scaffold.

The pious fraud seemed successful, and Gabrielle, who was already prepared for the sad tidings, bore them with as much resignation as could be expected, and François Robert departed, leaving his sister in the charge of an old nurse who was to see that no one else came near her, or showed her a newspaper, till his return. His orders had been faithfully carried out, and he found his sister in the same happy ignorance as when he left her. His fury at hearing the secret thus rudely disclosed may be readily imagined.

Liardot however was not a man to be easily intimidated, and he only replied: "I regret that I have pained Mademoiselle Robert by informing her of a calamity with which I supposed her already conversant. But I am only fulfilling a sacred duty. Coster de St. Victor, my friend and brother, is about to die an infamous death, and my only hope of saving him is a pardon."

"Your friend!" repeated the exasperated Major; "friend to a Chouan! Then you must be a traitor!"

"I served in the king's army in Brittany, as I thought you knew," said Liardot calmly. "It matters not, however, if I am false to those I serve

now, you will be able to punish me, for I shall take no steps to defend myself. Do what you like to me, but save the man who once saved you in the park at Malmaison."

François Robert had not expected any illusion to his adventure with the Black Leg. He started, and stammered something that was interrupted by Gabrielle's exclamation, "We will save him!"

The officer made a gesture rather of vexation than refusal.

"I reckoned on your assistance," said Liardot, "for I know your generous soul."

"Did your friend send you hither?" said the Major bitterly; "I thought I had already discharged my debt."

"M. de St. Victor knows nothing of my present step, the only commission with which he entrusted me was to give his ring to Mademoiselle Robert." And drawing the ring from his finger, he presented it to Gabrielle, who took it and kissed it.

"What can I do? Speak!" cried she enthusiastically. "I am ready to do anything to save him from death, and I am sure my brother will second me."

"You must ask the Emperor to pardon him."

"I will, and he will not refuse me."

"He has granted every pardon that has been solicited by the wives, daughters, or sisters of the condemned men."

"I was betrothed—the Emperor will take pity on me—and then I will throw myself at the feet of the Empress; she is so kind and has always shown me so much affection—she will join in my entreaties, and the Emperor will grant a pardon."

"Will he grant it to-day?"

"To-day? What do you mean?"

"That the condemned man may not have three days to live. Their appeal will be considered to-day, and it is sure to be rejected. To-morrow is Sunday, when the law does not admit of executions, but on Monday—"

"I will see the Emperor to-day—this very morning—I must. François, you will take me to him—he will receive you. You must tell him that I am waiting on my knees, in tears, and he will allow you to bring me to his feet."

"I have been admitted to the Emperor's presence this very morning," said the officer hastily; "I have given him my report, and have no further pretext for intruding upon his privacy."

"You can find one—or else I will fall on my knees before his aide-de-camp, General Duroc. He will listen to me."

"The Emperor was at work till daybreak, and he is sleeping now."

"Oh, my God! Inspire me," cried Gabrielle. The Major made no reply. Liardot too was silent and gazed sadly on the girl, whose back was turned towards the palace. Suddenly, his eyes became fixed on a window which had just been thrown open on the ground floor, close to the Flora pavilion.

"God has heard your prayer, Mademoiselle," said he instantly. "There is the Emperor."

It was true. The Emperor was standing at his study window, wearing the green uniform of the mounted Chasseurs of his guard. His bare head, on which a sunbeam fell, stood out against the dark background, and looked even paler than in the days when Gabrielle had seen him walking with his hands behind his back in the park at Malmaison. He was no longer the

General Bonaparte just returned from Italy, thin, yellow, and bowed beneath the weight of his early laurels, but neither was he yet the Emperor grown heavy under the long exercise of supreme power, like a Roman Cæsar of the decaying empire. In 1804, the First Consul was still discernible under the recent potentate, and the pure and severe lines of his profile thus framed in the gilded woodwork of the lofty window resembled an ancient marble medallion, inserted in the wall of the royal palace.

Napoleon had evidently come to inhale a breath of the fresh morning air after a night of toil, and was enjoying the balmy odours of the garden. His wearied eyes rested on the flowers, trees, and sky, and possibly he reflected that war is impious, since it destroys the works of God. He did not notice the little group within a few yards of him, and never saw Gabrielle till she fell on her knees beneath the window out of which he was leaning. "Pardon, Sire!" cried she, raising her supplicating hands to the Emperor.

The autocrat of so many destinies, thus recalled to terrestrial realities, frowned, drew himself up, and said in a sharp, curt voice: "Who are you?"

Then, as he recalled the charming face he had often seen in Josephine's presence, and recognised the officer, who had drawn nearer to come to his sister's help, he said more gently: "I know now who you are. Rise."

"Sire, my sister is but a child—excuse her—" stammered François Robert as he raised Gabrielle.

"Let her explain herself," was the imperial rejoinder. "I am sure that it is not her own pardon she would sue for," added he, with a smile that boded well. "Tell me what you want, Mademoiselle?"

"Pardon, sire, for a condemned man," murmured the young girl, who could scarcely stand.

"Why do you take an interest in this condemned man?"

This question was unexpected. Gabrielle turned pale and half tottered. Then an inspiration came to her.

"I love him, sire," said she in a faint voice. "I love him and this is our betrothal ring." So saying, she held out St. Victor's ring, which she still held in her hand.

"Your betrothed lover, do you say?" asked Napoleon. "I thought you were to have married an officer in my Guard. Eh, Major?"

"There was indeed some talk of this marriage," Robert hastened to answer, "and your Majesty was even good enough to interest yourself in it, but certain difficulties presented themselves."

"Ah, yes, I recollect!" said the Emperor, laughing. "Certain difficulties arising from a Black Leg—and so it is you, Mademoiselle," added he, "who despise a brave captain whom I have just made commander of a squadron and officer of the Legion of Honour, and you condemn the dowry I was willing to give you on your marriage."

This time, Gabrielle felt her strength failing, but she contrived to murmur: "Sire, I am ready to accept your Majesty's bounty—and to marry Captain Ferlier—and I swear never again to see the man to whom I had plighted my faith, if you will deign to grant me his pardon."

"Do you really love him?"

"I did, sire, but I will keep my word."

"What do you say to this, Robert?" asked the Emperor, completely reassured.

"I say, sire, that my sister is truth itself."

"Well, and the rest is Ferlier's affair, I suppose," said Napoleon gaily.

"Now, Mademoiselle, what has this man done in whose fate you are so much interested?"

"He has conspired against your Majesty."

"Then he is a Chouan?"

"Yes, sire."

"His name?"

"Coster de St. Victor," replied Gabrielle, trembling.

"The most dangerous of all! Cadoudal's first lieutenant!" cried the Emperor. "If I were to pardon him, I should be committing an injustice, for the others are less guilty. Do not speak to me of this man! The law must take its course."

"Sire, I implore you!"

"Do not you know that the man you undertake to defend tried to assassinate me?"

"No, sire, it cannot be. He is incapable of such infamy. Ask my brother."

The vehemence and simplicity of this reply assuaged the Emperor's anger. "Women are all alike," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "They would upset the mechanism of the heavens in favour of the man they love. If these royalists," added he in a milder tone, "had only attempted my life, I might pardon them, but they have endeavoured to overthrow the established government, and kindle civil war in France. They are undeserving of compassion."

"Sire, I love him!"

"And do you not think that the mothers and wives they would have bereaved if their execrable projects had succeeded, loved *their* sons and husbands also? The country must be avenged."

"Ah, sire, if I could implore these mothers and wives, if they only saw my despair, they would join in my cry for mercy."

"And what is the life of a man compared with the peace of the nation?" resumed Napoleon, who always became more animated as he spoke. "Is this Chouan's blood purer than that which must be shed on the battlefield? Before this season comes round again, I may have landed in England at the head of my army. Will death have compassion on my obscure heroes who sacrifice themselves to secure the independence of their country, and can you hope I should show greater clemency to a conspirator and rebel than fortune will to my soldiers?"

"Sire, fortune is blind, but you are the chosen Emperor of France, and I am sure that in your powerful hands the life of one of your most humble and misguided subjects weighs equally with that of the greatest prince."

Napoleon started and his brow clouded. Had he seen in Gabrielle's impassioned words an illusion to the recent death of the Duc d'Enghien? The Major thought so and bowed his head, waiting for an explosion which did not come.

"What a country this must be where young girls find such arguments to defend their lovers!" said the Emperor, half laughing. "You wish this St. Victor to be pardoned?" asked he of Gabrielle, with one of those eagle glances under which the boldest quailed.

"Yes, sire," said the girl without flinching.

"Let him ask me himself and I will grant his request." And leaving the window, Napoleon vanished into the recesses of his study. Gabrielle was left trembling and motionless, not quite understanding whether there was yet ground for hope.

"Come," said her brother, seizing her by the arm, and he drew her to the spot where Liardot had remained, half concealed by the pedestal of a great marble vase.

"Well?" asked the former leader of the *Collets Noirs*.

"The Emperor will pardon Coster de St. Victor," replied François Robert drily, "if Coster de St. Victor consents to implore his clemency. A petition must be drawn up and signed by him." Liardot shook his head sadly.

"Come to my quarters at seven o'clock to-night," resumed the officer. "I shall be there, and will hand you the order for visiting the prisoner's cell. When you bring me his petition, I will place it before the Emperor, who will at once grant a commutation of the penalty. It rests with you to have it ready in time. Now go."

Gabrielle probably read the doubt expressed in Liardot's eyes. "Tell him that it is I who have sued for his pardon, and that I implore him to sign," she exclaimed.

The old Chouan bowed and retired without another word.

XVIII.

LIARDOT did not bear away with him much hope when he parted with Gabrielle Robert, still he resolved to execute the mission with which she had entrusted him. During the afternoon, he heard that the Chouans' appeal had been rejected and that their sentence would soon be carried into execution. That evening he waited on Major Robert at the appointed hour, and received from him the order to admit him to St. Victor's cell, accompanied by the words: "The Emperor is still in the same mind. He will pardon Coster de St. Victor if the prisoner forwards a written appeal to his clemency, as he is willing to spare the lives of all those who will give a similar proof of repentance, including Cadoudal."

Liardot could not refrain from a gesture of surprise.

"Such is the case," resumed the officer, coldly. "You see my master is superior to your princes, who risk the lives of their partisans without sharing their perils. But the signed petition is an absolute condition. Tell your protégé this; I will not seek to inquire why you protect him. As soon as you get the petition, bring it to the palace in an envelope addressed: *Major Robert, from the prisoner St. Victor*. My duties will detain me till Tuesday at the Tuileries, and I promise to bring it at once under the Emperor's notice. But do not attempt to see me again; whatever happens, this must be our last interview."

The old Chouan bowed silently and hastened to the Conciergerie. The condemned men had not yet been transferred thither from Bicêtre, though they were expected; the governor promised to allow him to see St. Victor early next morning, and he was forced to return home, where he spent the night in burning his papers and preparing for his approaching departure. Early next morning he repaired to the Conciergerie. It was Sunday, the 24th June, and the prisoners were attending mass in the prison chapel.

At noon the governor himself took him to St. Victor's cell, and consented to leave them by themselves, on condition it should be only for half an hour. The obliging official was not much afraid of compromising himself, because he knew the relation in which the supposed Sourdau stood to Fouché.

"So here you are, my old comrade," exclaimed St. Victor, holding out both hands to his friend. "It is good of you to have come."

"You might have been sure you would see me again," murmured Liardot, who was far more moved than the prisoner.

"I felt sure you would try, but I did not know whether you could gain admission."

"You must know that they refuse me nothing because I belong to their party," said the old Chouan, bitterly. "I should have come sooner, but that—"

"Oh, you have arrived just in time," said St. Victor, gaily. "It is fixed for to-morrow."

"Indeed! Who can have told you?"

"Oh, the courteous governor. Besides, we had our suspicions when we were transferred yesterday from Bicêtre. I am glad enough of it, I assure you. I long to escape into the open air, even though it be that of the Place de Grève. These gloomy walls seemed to weigh me down, and I cannot bear the sight of the dreadful tower in which the queen was shut up before she was dragged to execution. There is nothing left for me to regret, and I have had an interview this morning with an excellent priest. I believe I am prepared to die at this moment, and as I have always been a great sinner, I must welcome this opportunity.—But now let us talk of you, my dear fellow. What will you do when we are gone?"

"Go—leave France for ever."

"Quite right. Our unhappy country has ceased to deserve the sacrifice of any more lives. But have you succeeded in saving Louise? I trembled lest she should appear by our side in court, but since—"

Liardot turned pale as he said: "She is dead. Her husband killed her."

"Maneu! The wretch! I always suspected him of being a coward and a traitor. If I were free, it would give me immense pleasure to blow his brains out. Have you not avenged her?"

"He fled, and has managed to elude the police, but if ever I find him—"

"Execute justice on him, I charge you. And now, by the way, did you discharge the commission I entrusted you with?"

"I delivered the ring to Mademoiselle Robert, yesterday."

"Then you saw her! What did she say?"

"Scarcely anything. Her brother was present."

"What! And did he not object to her receiving the ring?"

"No. When she heard of your arrest, she became seriously ill, and they made her believe you had died of your wounds. She hovered for nearly three months between life and death, and is only just recovering. No doubt the Major was afraid of exciting her, for he made not the slightest objection."

"Oh, how I blame myself for having ever doubted her love. Poor Gabrielle, I ought to have concealed my fate from you! Perhaps it would have been better if you had not spoken of her—I felt so ready to die, and now—I shall wish to live."

"You are not to die. I bear with me your pardon."

"Pardon! Does Bonaparte grant me a pardon? Then Gabrielle must have asked for it?"

"She did, and she obtained it too. Her brother was present during her interview with the Emperor, but he never said a word. I was there as well, and I swear you are indebted exclusively to Mademoiselle Robert."

"And to Bonaparte. Then has he pardoned George and all our comrades likewise?"

"That depends on themselves. They have only to accept his conditions."

"Ah, then there is a condition? I am not surprised. A *parvenu* cannot be expected to pardon like a real king. What is this condition?"

"Oh, nothing very severe. It is merely to affix your signature to this petition," said Liardot, drawing a paper from his pocket.

"I thought as much."

"You may sign it, for I drew up the petition myself and there is nothing humiliating in its terms."

"I am persuaded of that. But are you the bearer of a similar paper for each of our friends?"

"No. It does not rest with me to propose it to them, but I know the offer will be made to all, and especially to Cadoudal."

"And do you think," resumed St. Victor, eyeing his friend closely, "that Cadoudal will submit to this condition imposed by the most gracious sovereign of the French nation?" Liardot looked on the ground and made no answer. "Answer me frankly, Fleur-de-Rose. What do you think George will do? You make no reply. Then you are as convinced as I am that George will refuse."

"George is not in your position. He is the leader of a party, and may scruple to influence the king's soldiers by accepting this offer from the government."

"If he is bound to give an example because he is the leader, his lieutenant is bound to follow him," said St. Victor, proudly. "I refuse to sign."

"Do you want Gabrielle to die of grief?" murmured Liardot. "She sent me here to implore you to sacrifice your pride."

"My honour, you mean."

"To sacrifice your legitimate pride to your love. Do you think I would have undertaken the errand if I thought you would dishonour yourself by consenting to live? You have a right to die yourself, but no right to make the woman who loves you die of grief."

St. Victor started, and his eyes filled with tears. "Fleur-de-Rose," said he, after a brief silence, "you might have spared me this trial. I forgive you, for I ought to have foreseen what would happen when I charged you to bear my ring to Gabrielle. Now, before deciding, I must ask you to give an honest answer to several questions I shall put."

"I promise to do so."

"Thank you. Then tell me the exact nature of the favour proposed. Am I to receive a free pardon, or only a commutation of the death-sentence?"

"You will be imprisoned in the fortress of Joux."

"Just the way the Emperor has treated all those he has deigned to pardon. M. de Rivière was to be sent there too, so I should have company. And how long am I supposed to remain in this delightful fortress?"

Liardot made no reply.

"You promised to tell me the truth," said St. Victor.

"Your sentence is to be commuted to imprisonment for life," murmured the old Chonan.

"Ah, that settles my choice. I should be a fool did I hesitate for a moment between the guillotine and spending the remainder of my life in this charming fortress."

"Who can say you must end your days there? Time works many changes, and political rigour never lasts for ever. In the Reign of Terror,

the prisoners who managed to live till the 9th Thermidor were saved. Who knows whether Bonaparte will be reigning ten years hence?"

"Unhappily it is highly probable, and I have little to expect from his compassion; but even supposing I were set at liberty after spending ten years in confinement, I should find myself an old man. To what could I look forward? Would there be anyone still left to take an interest in me? Forgive me for my weakness, but you have seen Gabrielle's brother, and must know what is to become of her. Give me your word of honour that she is to remain free." Liardot hung down his head sadly. "I understand," said St. Victor in an altered voice. "They had been urging her to marry, and she refused—then, in order to save me, she promised—she has submitted to the odious bargain driven with her. Have I not guessed aright?"

"Yes," murmured the old Chonan.

"Thank you, my friend. Your frankness has saved me from a weakness of which I should have repented bitterly hereafter. Bonaparte will look in vain for the name of Jean Baptiste Coster de St. Victor at the foot of this paper."

"Gabrielle entreats you, by me as her mouthpiece, to sign for the sake of your love and—"

The door of the cell opened, and the governor appeared. The half-hour granted for the interview had elapsed.

"Ah, you have just come at the right moment," said the condemned man, drawing himself up. "Our conversation is ended, and I am immensely obliged to you for having given us time for this chat. Any one going on a long journey, as I am, has always a number of commissions to give to the friend he leaves behind."

These words were accompanied with such a bright smile, that the governor looked at him with admiration, and felt touched.

"And now farewell, my good old comrade," resumed St. Victor. "We are not likely ever to meet again in this world, unless you show me a friend's face in the crowd to-morrow."

"I shall be there," said Liardot, throwing himself into his arms.

St. Victor held him to his breast and murmured in his ear as they exchanged this parting embrace: "If you should see her again, say that my last thoughts will be of her."

Liardot left the Conciergerie broken hearted. He was resolved to carry out his labours to the end, and spent that afternoon in completing his preparations. He wrote two letters in case of accident, one to Mademoiselle Robert to express his regret at having failed in his mission, and to convey St. Victor's last farewell, and another to M. Fouché, to announce that, wearied of life, he was about to drown himself in the Seine. He hoped this fiction would divert the police from his track, and that he should speedily be forgotten.

After a sleepless night, he quitted for ever the house in the Rue des Prouvaires where he had suffered so much, and turned his steps towards the Conciergerie, followed by Jacobin, to see if there was any change in the frightful programme for that day. He found the streets and quays adjoining the Place de Grève already crowded; some idlers near him were saying that the execution was to take place at ten, and three carts were just passing under the arched door of the Conciergerie. He knew that a

last attempt was to be made to induce Cadoudal to solicit a pardon, and he waited.

Ten o'clock struck, and then the half hour, but the fatal door never opened. The word *reprieve* began to pass through the crowd, and Liardot began to hope. He could not see what was passing behind the dark walls of the old gaol. A messenger despatched by the Chief Justice had indeed come, and held a long interview with Cadoudal. But at a quarter past ten, all the prisoners entered the registrar's ante-room together to be prepared for execution, and George was heard to say in a loud voice: "That man is not satisfied with my head, he wants my honour also."

"I suppose you refused to sign," said St. Victor.

"As I should have refused to capitulate when I was commanding in Brittany," replied the Chouan leader haughtily.

"I did well not to allow myself to be moved yesterday," murmured the young lieutenant.

Not one of those about to die seemed to quail, and George looked as if he were leading them on to battle. His carriage was firm, his eye steady, his cheek rosy, and there was no tremor in his voice as he walked straight up to Sanson, saying:

"Are you the executioner, sir?" A gesture answered him in the affirmative. "In that case, you should know that I wish to be despatched first, so as to give my friends an example of courage and resignation. Besides, I do not wish any of them to leave this world with the idea that I should survive him."

Sanson rejoined that the order of execution was already fixed, and that he was to be the last.

"Pooh," replied George, "they have been too persistent in pressing their favours upon me to refuse the only thing I ask."

The executioner did not think himself justified in altering the arrangement without the sanction of the Chief Justice, and the registrar, who had come to read over the sentence, undertook to be the bearer of George's request. This was the cause of the delay which had given Liardot an instant of hope, but within half-an-hour the registrar had returned with a refusal.

The executioner's men had finished, and Cadoudal stood erect: "Now," said he, "let us show these Parisians how Christians, Royalists, and Bretons can die!" And without awaiting the signal from the executioner, he gave the word of command, "March!" with as much spirit as if he were going to storm a redoubt.

Liardot felt dizzy, but he forced his way through the surrounding groups and followed the funeral procession. A gendarme, recognising him, made a place for him in their ranks, persuaded, no doubt, that the agent Sourdats was there on business; this enabled him to pursue his way without difficulty in the rear of the last cart.

They reached the guillotine, which extended its two red arms over the entrance to the Place de Grève, whither it had been removed the previous year from its old position facing the principal entrance of the Hotel-de-Ville. One by one, the men mounted the scaffold and perished silently. The gory knife rose and fell ten times, till only George and his lieutenant were left. St. Victor wished to give his General a last embrace, and Cadoudal shrugged his shoulders, as if condemning an act of childish weakness, as he received the kiss. Then, when his friend's handsome head had fallen, he stepped forward, making a sign to the executioners not to touch him, and mounted

the scaffold with a slow but firm step. When he had reached the platform, he drew himself up to his full height, and cried in the sonorous voice which had so often led to battle during the civil war : "Comrades, I come to join you. God save the King !"

The knife descended, and George Cadoudal's head fell. But the baskets were full, and the colossal frame of the Chouan General remained for more than a quarter of an hour on the scaffold. Sanson had to send for some linen to make a shroud of his size.

The crowd, satiated with horrors, hastened to escape from the terrible spectacle, and Liardot allowed himself to be borne away by the movement back towards the quay. George's last cry was still resounding in his ears as he walked on, staggering like a tipsy man, unconscious whither he was being carried by the human stream. Now and then he glanced at the Seine, and longed to throw himself in, that he might not survive his unfortunate friends. Then he felt indignant, and reflected that a day might yet come when the Chouans would be avenged, and so he walked on and on, till he found himself in front of the Tuileries, and raising his eyes, saw the Flora pavilion.

This reminded him that he had a sacred mission to discharge ; he had promised to let Gabrielle know that she had been in St. Victor's thoughts when he died, so, taking the letter he had written, he gave it to the porter at the door of the palace. As he was coming away through the postern gate which opened on the quay, he felt some one clap him on the shoulder, and turning round, found himself face to face with Caillotte.

"Good-day, Sourd'at," said the spy, with a grimace which he meant for a smile ; "I suppose you are on your way back from the Grève ?"

Liardot longed to fly at the rascal's throat, but restrained himself.

"And so you took the Chouan woman's dog with you," resumed Caillotte without waiting for an answer. "You did well to keep it, and say good-bye to your old friends. That animal is worth its weight in gold, and those Chouans were rough customers."

And as he saw that Liardot's eyes expressed anything but good-will, he hastened to add ? "Oh, don't be alarmed. I am not the man to tell the master all I know about you. That was all very well in the days when I had my fortune to make, but now that I am rich, I have no wish to make myself enemies. Who knows but the royalists may have their turn some day ? Oh, I am not laughing, I assure you. I would bet anything you have just been to convey that handsome fellow's last farewells to Mademoiselle Robert. Are you surprised that I know so much ? Then you must have forgotten that I was acquainted with the story of the Black Leg. Why, I know all about the interview the brother and sister had with the Emperor under his study window, and your visit to the Conciergerie. The poor Major must be in despair."

"What do you mean ?"

"It is all up with the marriage he had planned for his sister, for she has joined a sisterhood. Your letter will not be in time : she has just left for the convent of the sisters of St. Vincent-de-Paul. Good-bye, Sourd'at," added the spy, as he turned on his heel. "That St. Victor was certainly a brave fellow."

An hour after this singular meeting, Liardot quitted Paris with the determination never to return.

XIX.

ON the confines of the forest of Hellet, close to the little town of Croixdalle, between Neufchâtel and Dieppe, two men were seated beneath a rude hut made of straw and dead branches, finishing a frugal meal of black bread and cider.

Day was declining, and the slanting rays of the setting sun were gilding the silver trunks of the tall beeches. It was July, and the heat was very oppressive. Everything was silent in the forest. A dog lying before the door of the hut often cocked his ear to listen, and the evening breeze brought no sound but the faint rustle of the leaves. The chips which strewed the clearing were enough to show the occupation of the owner of the hut even without the pile of sabots stacked beneath his thatched roof. His guest, who was disguised as a pedlar, just as when we first saw him at the beginning of this story, was Liardot, who had that morning reached the last stage of his journey, and arrived at the hut of Jean Tanguy, the sabot-maker.

"It will soon be time to start," murmured Liardot.

"Wait a little longer, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose," said the sabot-maker; "in another hour it will be dark, and it is not fifteen miles to Biville."

"I know that, but I want to reach the coast before dawn, and I must allow time for the chance of losing my way."

"Impossible, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose, you know it too well, and if you are to go astray, Maneheu's dog never would."

"Repeat what you were telling me just now. Where shall I find the path down to the shore?"

"Within a stone's throw of the right of the cleft where the cable used to be hung, but it is not very easy to descend, and some prefer the cleft still; you will do as you think best, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose. Costard's boat will come to the right of Biville cliff, between three and four in the morning. You will know it by the red sail; besides, my boy will be on board to identify you, or Costard will never take you."

"And you are certain that the cleft is still practicable?"

"Yes, to be sure, and without a rope, but requires strength and agility too. Noël Sauv  , the smuggler, has climbed it more than once with a bale on his back."

"Well, I shall decide when I get there. I cannot miss my way to the cliff if I get once upon the moor."

"No, I am sure you will not. But if I might venture to advise you, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose, do not pass by Bois-Guillaume."

"Why not?"

"Because the house is haunted," said the sabot-maker, lowering his voice.

"Why, the house was burnt down last year!"

"True, and only the walls are left standing, but there are cellars, and the people at Biville say they have heard chains clanking, and hollow sounds as if some one were digging in the ground,—and once, when my little boy was returning from selling sabots at Criel, he passed Bois-Guillaume by twilight, and saw a long black shadow gliding under the apple-trees."

"Is that some time since?"

"No, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose. It is only about a month since it began to be talked about."

"And what do people say about it?"

"The mayor of Biville, who is a rabid *blue*, maintains that there must be Chouans lurking there, and talks of making a search. But as I know there are no Chouans left now, I have my own idea. I believe it is the ghost of that poor dead woman, wandering by night among the ruins of her father's farm."

"Louise!" exclaimed Liardot, giving an involuntary start.

"Yes, Louise Le Graverend, who was born at Bois-Guillaume. You told me she died about Whitsuntide, and that was close upon the time when these sounds began to be heard."

"The dead never come back, my friend," said Liardot, pensively, and as Tanguy was about to protest, he added: "Has the farm been sold since it was set on fire?"

"No. The mayor of Gamaches, who once bought it as national property and is now almost ruined, would be glad enough to get rid of it, but no one will buy it, for they say the place is unlucky."

"It is evident," murmured the former leader of the *Collets Noirs*, "that if any one had an interest in preventing the sale of Bois-Guillaume, he could not have hit upon anything more calculated to frighten away the peasants than these nocturnal disturbances." "It matters little," resumed he aloud, "it is time for me to start if I mean to reach the coast before daybreak." And whistling to Jacobin, who started instantly to his feet, the old Chouan rose, adjusted his gaiters, took his stick, and said to the sabot-maker:

"Farewell, good old Tanguy, I do not think we shall ever meet again, and I should not wish you to end your days in this miserable cabin. Take this roll of a hundred louis to buy yourself a shop at Tréport, so that you may carry on your trade under a more solid roof."

"A hundred louis!" exclaimed Tanguy. "What should I do with such a sum as that, Monsieur Fleur-de-Rose?"

"You can leave it to your son if you do not care to use it. Take it, and let us say good-bye."

The sabot-maker was profuse in protestations and thanks, as he pocketed the roll.

It was a moonless night, but the evening light of July enabled Liardot easily to find his way, and his intelligent companion ran about five yards in front as a pioneer, stopping occasionally to sniff around him. Liardot walked on for five hours without meeting with any incident, and a light was already beginning to appear on the eastern horizon when, after crossing the high road from Dieppe to Tréport, he found himself on the Biville moor.

He naturally recalled Tanguy's singular tale, and though he attached little importance to it, he resolved to act contrary to his advice by crossing the suspected precincts of the farm. He had no belief in apparitions, but it had occurred to him that if Maneheu had left any money hidden in a cellar, he might have come back for it, though since he must have quitted Paris about the 20th of May, and it was now the 3rd July, he must have had time to unearth his treasure long ago.

Liardot, however, wasted little time in conjectures, but pushed forward, to find the orchard gate gone, and the hedge half destroyed: the walls of the building were still standing, but brambles were already climbing over the ruins. The former leader of the *Collets Noirs* was looking sadly at these vestiges, which recalled such cruel memories, when Jacobin began to growl; he listened and heard a strange sound like a hammer falling on an

anvil. He listened still more closely, but after a few seconds the sound ceased. He was determined to find out what it was, and advanced cautiously towards a great heap of rubbish from which it had seemed to proceed. Jacobin followed, growling and showing his teeth.

They had scarcely set foot on the heap of stones when a man seemed to rise from the ground only a few yards before them and ran towards the moor. The dog barked and ran after him, and Liardot was about to join in the chase, when his feet caught in the brambles and down he fell. He heard a howl of pain, and saw Jacobin returning, covered with blood.

Liardot felt furious, and, thrusting a pistol into his belt, ran a few steps in pursuit of the fugitive, but soon checked himself, remembering the impossibility of overtaking him in the darkness on the wide expanse of heath. It next occurred to him to examine the spot from which the man must have emerged, and he found a place recently excavated. Stooping down, he saw the opening to a set of steps, evidently belonging to the cellar of the farm; they had been choked by the fall of the roof, but must have been laid bare by the man who had just run off.

Jacobin darted down, and Liardot followed. Great indeed was his surprise to find a lighted lantern lying by the side of a cask of cider, as well as an iron chest, the lid of which had been broken in by a mattock. This chest must have been buried under the cellar floor, for there was a yawning hole and the earth seemed to have been disturbed recently. The chest was perfectly empty.

The old Chouan was now easily able to account for the nocturnal sounds which had alarmed the neighbourhood. The supposed ghost was simply working his way to the hidden treasure, which must have been a long and laborious task. It was plain that the chest had been reached at the very moment when Liardot penetrated into the ruins; he had arrived just in time to hear the last blows of the mattock, and to see the man escape with the money. Who could this man be? Some peasant might have been attracted by the reputation for opulence and avarice left behind him by Maneheu, but, on the other hand, Maneheu himself might be risking his life and liberty to regain his hoarded treasure, and it was not impossible that he might be living in concealment in the woods, or have found refuge with some smuggler. Still all was uncertain, and Liardot had no time to spare if he meant to take the present opportunity for crossing to England.

It was approaching dawn, and it was important for him to hasten to the cliff, so, leaving the ruins of Bois-Guillaume, he struck across the moor, Jacobin, who was not seriously injured, preceding him still.

When he had gone about half way, he passed close by the quarry, where, ten months before, he had faced death. "Why was I not shot here!" murmured he, as he gazed on the block of stone by which he had been stationed to give the order to fire. Quickening his steps, he soon recognised the slight ravine in which he had lain concealed with the Chouans that 21st of August; nay, he even found the stone to which the cable had been attached, though the latter was gone. He then advanced to the extreme edge of the cliff and leaned over; it was still twilight and the rock faced north-west, so it did not catch the first rays of the rising sun. Liardot saw nothing beneath his feet but a black chasm resembling a chimney, and recognised that he must wait a few minutes longer before he could judge whether the descent were practicable.

Had Jacobin scented an enemy? He stretched his neck over the abyss, and barked furiously. His master had some trouble to silence him and

force him to lie down at his feet. The brave animal at length crouched down, within a yard of the edge of the cliff, keeping his head turned towards the cleft.

The Chouan looked anxiously for the boat, and soon caught sight of it on the right, almost hugging the shore. The sea was as calm as a pond, and was gradually becoming tinted with the opal hues of dawn. A slight mist rose from the shore, vanishing under the first beams of the sun as it emerged behind the tall trees of the forest of Eu. Liardot recognised the boat by its red sail, and saw it was about to put in under Biville cliff. He was following its movements with the greatest attention, and never once looked down.

What followed occurred in less time than we can describe it. The head and shoulders of a man who clung to the walls of the cleft by his knees appeared above the cliff. This man was Maneheu, and in his hand he held a pistol, which he discharged close to Liardot.

"This time I have not missed him," cried the miserable man, as Liardot fell. The bullet had struck him, just as it did Louise, through the heart.

But Maneheu, the twofold assassin, had never thought of the dog. Jacobin sprang up, seized him by the throat, and rolled down with him to the shore. The last of the Baromesnils was avenged.

The crew of the fishing smack found on the rocks the shattered corpse of a man who carried an enormous sum of money in his belt. The dog was dead, but he had never relaxed hold of the assassin. The sailors took the gold, and left the bodies on the sand to be floated out to sea by the tide.

No one identified Liardot; they buried with him the portrait of Christiane, which had been found on his breast, pierced through by Maneheu's bullet. He was interred in the graveyard at Biville; only a nameless cross of wood marked his resting-place, and when the king came to his throne, the grass had already covered with oblivion the tomb of the leader of the *Collets Noirs*.

François Robert was killed at Waterloo, and Gabrielle, who was known in religion as Sister Marcella, died of yellow fever at Barcelona, whither she had hastened to nurse the victims of the terrible epidemic of 1822.

But Caillotte, the spy, died quietly in his bed at the close of a long life.

The righteous have not their portion in this world.

THE END.

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